

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Iraq sentences Jordanian, Saudi to death

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A Jordanian and a Saudi have been sentenced to death for murdering a Jordanian foreign ministry driver in Iraq in November. Iraqi television said Saturday. The Jordanian, Nasser Hantur Bashir Al Rueli, 23, and the Saudi, Zuhair Batam Khedji Al Zueili, 27, were convicted of killing Umar Ahmad Ali Sobh at a gas station on the road from Amman to Baghdad and stealing his car and diplomatic pouch. In televised confessions Feb. 15, Rueli and Zueili said they and a third man still at large, Syrian Tard Al Halabi, had grabbed Sobh, 40, because they wanted to steal his car. Sobh "refused to give us the keys, and I shot him once in the chest and twice in the head," the Saudi said. The Jordanian driver was taking the diplomatic bag to Baghdad when he was murdered. The two suspects did not say what happened to the bag, which, according to Jordanian authorities, contained 250 blank Jordanian passports.

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King congratulates radio, armed forces

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday congratulated Radio Jordan on its 38th anniversary and expressed appreciation of its great achievements and important role. In a phone call with the radio, King Hussein lauded the efforts of its staff and workers. The King also congratulated the Jordanian Armed Forces on the occasion of the Arabisation of the Armed Forces leadership, expressing pride in their sacrifices and efforts to serve their country.

Crown Prince visits badia region

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan inspected on Saturday the eastern badia region where he called at King Faisal Ben Abdul Aziz Air Base, Bayer police centre and bedouins in the region to whom Prince Hassan conveyed His Majesty King Hussein's greetings and appreciation.

Vatican denies U.S. protest over Libya

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican on Friday denied published reports that its move toward forging diplomatic ties with Libya prompted a U.S. rebuke. "I can say that the Holy See has not received any protest or objection from the U.S. administration" regarding relations with Libya, said a Vatican spokesman. The Vatican last week confirmed that it was negotiating to establish diplomatic relations with Libya.

Israel files complaint with truce panel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel lodged a complaint with the international committee monitoring the truce in South Lebanon after an Israeli soldier was killed, a military spokesman said Saturday. The spokesman said the complaint was filed Friday night after "the pro-Iranian Hizbollah fired on Israeli military positions from an inhabited area in Nabatiyeh" in South Lebanon, killing one soldier and wounding three others. Hizbollah said in a statement issued Friday in Beirut that it lost three guerrillas in clashes with the Israeli army in the Jewish state's self-declared "security zone" it occupies in South Lebanon. Hizbollah said it attacked five Israeli positions with light arms, anti-tank rockets and mortars and destroyed a Merkava tank, "killing and wounding" its occupants.

Clarification

AN ADVERTISEMENT on page 10 of yesterday's Jordan Times, sponsored and paid for by freelance journalist and translator Salwa Morsi Al Taher, was meant as a sarcastic message of protest against Israeli plans to build an Israeli settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem. Unfortunately, some of our readers thought the advertisement came from Israel and called our editors to protest. The Jordan Times regrets the misunderstanding and any inconvenience it may have caused them.

King dedicates Al Hashemiyeh Palace as home for orphans

HM, in letter to Kabariti, asks inefficient civil servants be sent home with compensation or continued pay so that they do not continue to block the work of efficient colleagues

King and Queen to move out of Al Nadwa Palace to Amman suburbs

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein announced that he will be moving with Her Majesty Queen Noor to a modest home undergoing refurbishing on the outskirts of Amman and said he had decided to give up Al Nadwa Palace to be transformed into a guest palace.

orphaned and homeless children, who, he said, will move to it immediately after it has been fitted for their accommodation.

The King also asked the prime minister to take measures to trim down the government bureaucracy which he said was slowing down government business.

Following is the text of the King's message: "Since my visit together with (Queen) Noor last Thursday to the Al Hussein Social Welfare Foundation,

which was established to care for the orphans in 1953, my mind has not been at rest and I was deprived of sleep because of what I saw of the poor conditions in this foundation and the condition of its occupants of innocent children. What I saw there has burdened my conscience and heart ever since the visit.

"I am not blaming you for this neither am I blaming the Minister (of Social Development) Hamad Abu Jamous who I had known as a brilliant

officer in our armed forces. Neither do I belittle your allegiance to the nation and your keenness to carry out your duties with all your capabilities.

"In fact I support your efforts and the efforts of all Jordanians who loathe bureaucracy and its crippling effect on the state apparatus. I stand by all those citizens who are fed up with all those who obstruct the process of genuine reform to the public administration. Such reform would place

the competent and efficient civil servants in the right place that they deserve and place them where they can be productive and rewarded for the creative skills.

"It is a thousand times better for this country to have its public administration trimmed down by disposing of excess elements that obstruct the country's march.

"As to those who are a surplus to public administration's needs, those who do not work day and night, those who need work only

to earn a living, they should stay at home, receive salaries or compensation for their past services until they can find a suitable occupation outside the framework of the public administration. That will be far better than having them act as obstacles, obstructing the work of others, standing in the way of promising people and slowing down the march by occupying jobs that they are not fit to occupy. I am saying this as I am quite certain that this prob-

lem does exist in almost each and every ministry and department.

"As to the orphaned victims, those free spirits, whose sufferings we saw during our visit to their foundation, they ought to arouse our conscience and those of the Jordanian people. We must make sure that the conditions we saw should not be repeated anywhere in our country.

"I saw with my own

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Arafat threatens to declare state to counter Israeli settlement plan

League resolution condemns Jabal Abu Ghneim project

CAIRO (Agencies) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Saturday threatened to declare an independent Palestinian state to counter Israeli plans to expand Jewish housing in Arab East Jerusalem.

"We are supposed to declare our Palestinian state in five years, but he is making changes and violating the agreements we have reached and ignoring the negotiations on a final status," Mr. Arafat said of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories are scheduled to begin this month.

"So, if I declare today from the Arab League the creation of a Palestinian state what will be his position? (For me) it will be one for one," he told an extraordinary Arab League session devoted to Israeli plans to create new Jewish homes in Arab East Jerusalem.

"We have at our disposal many weapons on the national, Arab and Palestinian levels," Mr. Arafat said in a passionate address to the permanent delegates of the 22-member pan-Arab organisation.

"I must remind him (Netanyahu) of the unanimous world condemnation" of Israeli plans to build housing for 25,000 Jews at Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem, Mr. Arafat said.

Mr. Netanyahu approved the construction of the first 2,500 homes in the settlement on Wednesday.

Mr. Arafat accused Mr. Netanyahu of trying to "torpedo the peace process."

"But I must tell him: no peace without Arab East Jerusalem and no peace with settlements," he told the Arab League.

Mr. Arafat stopped Saturday in Cairo to discuss the scheme, known to Israelis as har Homa, with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on his way to Washington for talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Mr. Mubarak, who has also been critical of Israel's settlement policies, meets Mr. Netanyahu on Wednesday in Cairo.

Abdul Meguid charged they would trigger a new cycle of violence.

Palestinian Labour Minister Samir Ghosheh meanwhile urged Arab states to freeze normalisation with Israel, adding that Palestinians were ready for any action.

The league adopted a resolution urging "all countries, particularly the United States and the European Union, to suspend economic and financial aid that Israel could use" for settlements in Palestinian territories.

It accused Israel of delivering "the heaviest blow to the peace process," and demanded an immediate halt to its "racist and expansionist practices (Ghneim)."

The league also appealed for urgent U.N. intervention to put an end to Israeli moves in Arab East Jerusalem.

The U.N. Security Council is to convene an emergency meeting this week on Israel's settlement policies in Arab East Jerusalem, council President Jigumna Mahugu said.

Mr. Abdul Meguid, who addressed the session before Mr. Arafat, dismissed the housing project as "illegal."

"What does Israel expect out of these policies which are opposed to peace, aimed at turning back the clock and threatening to reverse the peace process and place the entire middle east on the threshold of ... violence," he said.

The Egyptian foreign minister said: "The construction of settlements in Jerusalem ... is a source of deep concern for us and for the rest of the region. The settlement policy is provocation against the Arabs."

"In order to advance the peace process, on all its tracks, including (Arab-Israeli) normalisation both sides must act together," Mr. Musa said.

"The issue of Jerusalem is very, very touchy. One cannot toy with it," Mr. Musa told reporters. "There is no escape but to move on all the peace process's tracks and aspects toward normalisation."

"But what's needed is for the two parties to proceed in the same direction, not for Israel to go in a direction which incites people and changes (the status of) Jerusalem."

"The issue of settlements

is a dangerous one, an issue for which there is no legal basis," Mr. Musa said. "I don't think the settlement policy would lead to anything but destruction and adversely affect the peace process."

In the West Bank town of Ramallah, the Palestinian legislative council called for a general strike Monday to protest against the Jabal Abu Ghneim construction.

The White House has said the Arab East Jerusalem project had cast a cloud over Mr. Arafat's three-day visit to the United States, where he will also meet Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The Palestinian cabinet warned that the Israeli plan could threaten Middle East peace.

"The peace process cannot go on under the continuation of this settlement assault which aims to swallow Jerusalem," the cabinet said in a statement issued on Saturday.

Syria slammed as feeble U.S. criticism of the Israeli plans to build a new Jewish settlement in Jerusalem.

"The very timid remarks with which the White House criticised the building of the new settlement in Jerusalem aren't the type that would dissuade Israel," Syrian newspaper Al Thawra said.

"Frankly, we would have preferred the decision had not been taken," White House spokesman Michael McCurry said Thursday. "This is not a step that will build confidence."

African foreign ministers urged Israel to halt the building of new settlements on occupied Palestinian land and said this could destroy the Middle East peace process.

"The Council (of African Ministers)...urges Israel to immediately halt its confiscation of Palestinian territory and the construction of new settlements, especially in Jerusalem and in its environs," they said in a decision adopted late on Friday at the end of an Organisation of African Unity annual conference in Tripoli.

"The council expresses grave concern and condemnation of the Israeli government's violations of the principles of peace and peaceful coexistence," it added.

King to undergo medical checkup while in U.S.

Barak expected here today; Mordechai to visit next week

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein will visit the United States in the third week of March for medical checkups and then meet with President Bill Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Defence Secretary William Cohen, U.S. congressmen and the media.

King Hussein will also give a lecture at one of the main think tank centres in the U.S., Minister of Information Marwan Muasher told reporters after an ordinary Cabinet session on Saturday.

Dr. Muasher said the vis-

its of Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to Jordan next week and of former Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak today (Sunday) were within the context of the continued contacts with all Israelis in order to safeguard the peace process.

The minister said that Jordanians held in Israeli jails, who were arrested after the signing of the peace treaty with Israel in 1994, were released and negotiations to release those seized before the signing of the agreement were underway with the Israeli government.

The Council of Ministers

reviewed the outcome of Minister of Trade and Industry Ali Abul Ragheb's visit to Libya during which he met with senior Libyan officials.

Mr. Abul Ragheb told the Cabinet that he discussed with Libyan officials means of promoting economic ties and agreed on increasing trade between the Kingdom and Libya.

Mr. Abul Ragheb also said that Jordan and Libya agreed on forming a joint ministerial committee at the level of prime ministers.

Mr. Abul Ragheb also briefed the Cabinet on the

outcome of his visit to Tunisia and a free trade agreement that will be signed with the Tunisian government next month.

The Cabinet also approved a resolution adopted by a recent meeting of the Council for Arab Economic Unity to establish an Arab free trade zone in 1998.

The Cabinet also reviewed the effects of the recent heavy rains in Jordan and a meeting Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti held with an engineers association delegation (see page 12).

Baghdad: No food shipments before April

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq, crippled by six years of sanctions, will not receive its first shipment of humanitarian supplies before April, despite Baghdad's insistence that the delivery be speeded up, officials said.

"The distribution will not take place before April," one official said, again accusing the United States of "hindering the work of the U.N. Sanctions Committee" tasked with approving contracts under the U.N. oil-for-food deal.

A U.N. official in Baghdad told AFP that the first deliveries of food and medicines were expected before the end of March.

Under the oil-for-food agreement struck between the United Nations and Baghdad in December, Iraq is allowed to export \$2 billion worth of oil in six months, in return for badly-needed food and medicine.

But Baghdad has lodged an official complaint with the United Nations, protesting that more than two months after the deal was concluded, nothing has yet arrived to ease the suffering of Iraq's 20 million people.

U.N. Under-Secretary-General Yasushi Akashi, told reporters at the U.N. he doubted the amount of oil Iraq could sell would be increased past the \$2 bil-

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Kabariti to begin work on Cabinet reshuffle after Parliament session

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti is expected to embark on contacts with leaders of political groups and parliamentary blocs at the end of the present and last session of the 12th Parliament by March 19 on a government reshuffle, government sources said Saturday.

A report in Al Ra'i daily said that His Majesty King Hussein has ordered that the elections be held on time and that there will not be any extension of the mandate of the present parliament.

According to the report, Mr. Kabariti has already started informal consultations with Parliament mem-

bers to discuss the reshuffle having secured the green light for it from the King.

Mr. Kabariti will inform his colleagues in the cabinet of the impending reshuffle because ministers wishing to run in the coming elections should resign their public posts according to norms, the sources said.

Predicting that the coming government will be composed only of 24 ministers, the government sources said that the reshuffled government would have to supervise the November elections which will be held on the basis of the one-person, one-vote system.

The sources did not rule out the prospect of the gov-

ernment introducing a new temporary election law which would include basic changes affecting the administrative divisions and constituencies as well as raising to 100 from 80 the number of deputies in the Lower House.

Mr. Kabariti was also reported by these sources as saying that his contacts with Islamist deputies were positive and useful but that none of the Islamic Action Front party will join the new government.

Referring to the draft laws before Parliament, the sources said that they concern the economy, higher education and information

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Premier holds talks with Palestinian minister on situation, bilateral ties

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on Saturday reviewed with Palestinian Minister of Youth Talal Sider the general situation in the Palestinian territories in the light of Israel's plans to build more Jewish settlements in the Jerusalem area and the Israeli decision's negative repercussions.

Jordanian-Palestinian relations were also discussed at the meeting, which was attended by Minister of Youth Mohammad Daoudieh, Jordanian representative to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Ziyad Majali and Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Khatib.

Following the meeting, Mr. Sider told the press that he reviewed with Mr.

Kabariti due in Gaza on March 8

PRIME MINISTER Abdul Karim Kabariti will visit the Gaza Strip on March 8 for a meeting of the Jordan-Palestinian Cooperation Committee, officials said on Saturday. Mr. Kabariti is a joint chairman of the committee, which was created during the last visit to Amman by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Jan. 28. Arafat deputy Mahmoud Abbas co-chairs the panel.

Kabariti's latest developments in the Palestinian arena and Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation in the reconstruction of Palestinian institutions.

Mr. Sider described Israel's decision to build a Jewish settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem as very serious. He voiced hope that regional and international pressures would succeed in dissuading the Israelis from building the settlement.

The question of Israel's new settlement near Jerusalem was the main topic at a meeting of the Upper House of Parliament (Senate) held under the chairmanship of its speaker, Ahmad Lawzi, and in the presence of the Cabinet members.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour told the meeting that the question of Jewish settlements in

(Continued on page 7)

Turkish council warns Welfare to adhere to democracy, secularism

Powerful body denies military might be preparing to stage coup

ANKARA (Agencies) — A military-dominated council has told Turkey's Islamist-led government not to stray from the path of democracy and official secularism after weeks of tension between the secularist generals and the ruling coalition.

"Concessions must never be given on the applications of the republic's laws and constitution that guarantee the democratic system," the influential national security council (MGK) said in a statement read on the state-run TRT television station.

The council, attended by Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, met for nine hours until midnight on Friday (2200 GMT). Its pronouncements traditionally reflect the will of the army.

"The meeting decided to inform the cabinet of measures that need to be taken in respect to these issues," the statement said. It did not elaborate on the measures.

Strains have escalated since the army sent tanks on manoeuvres through Ankara's Sincan district early in February after an Islamist protest there attended by the Iranian ambassador.

Rumours of a possible coup against Mr. Erbakan's coalition have been rife but Western diplomats say the generals are reluctant to intervene, partly because Turkey's image abroad would suffer.

"All kinds of speculation that could harm Turkey's image and respect abroad and create doubts about its democracy... must be ended," the statement said.

Hasan Ekinci, an official of the junior coalition partner True Path Party (DYP), said before the council meeting that it would reduce political tension.

"(Erbakan's) Welfare Party) RP cannot behave like an opposition party, the task of governments is not to raise tension and stress. God willing, the RP leadership will be more careful after this," Mr. Ekinci told reporters.

Turkish media have carried reports — dismissed as untrue by Mr. Erbakan and the president's office — that President Suley-

man Demirel warned the coalition in a letter against threatening Turkey's "secularist, democratic (and) republican aims."

The reports, echoing Mr. Demirel's recent briefings to newspaper editors, aggravated political tension over the rising profile of Islamists in the Muslim but secular state.

"The fear that the rising tension of recent days will lead to the burning of bridges, however, unlikely, has been enough to make everybody's hair stand on end in Ankara," wrote Bilal Cetin, columnist for the liberal daily Yeni Yuzul.

Mr. Erbakan spoke on state television on Friday night about his eight-month-old coalition with pro-Western leader Tansu Ciller.

"Our government is working in a spirit of worship for the happiness of the people," Mr. Erbakan said, in an address trumpeting the government's economic achievements.

The start of the address coincided with the last of a month of nightly civilian protests, launched initially against state corruption, which have increasingly turned against Mr. Erbakan and his party.

The government this week survived a censure motion challenge from two leftist parties which said the coalition was a threat to Turkey's secularism. Next week it will face another censure motion debate in parliament proposed by the opposition.

The military's displeasure at Mr. Erbakan's efforts to push ahead with Islam-based policies is not expected to result in anything like the three army interventions seen in Turkey since 1960, analysts said.

Financial markets were steady and quiet awaiting the outcome of the meeting. The Istanbul share index closed up 0.81 per cent.

The army is upset at comments in favour of Sharia, or Islamic law, made by Islamists and by the Iranian ambassador at the anti-Israel protest in Sincan.

Relations between Ankara and Tehran have been soured over the Iranian

ambassador's involvement in the Sincan rally, which led to him being recalled to Iran.

The MGK — in theory a consultative body but whose resolutions are always implemented to the letter by the government — is believed to have opted to give Mr. Erbakan a last chance to rein in the extremists, and hence defuse persistent speculation about an impending military takeover.

The MGK denied that the military might be preparing to stage a coup against the Islamist-led government.

"Speculations causing doubts about the Turkish democracy at a time when Turkey aims at entering a list of candidate countries for European Union membership should be brought to an end," the statement said.

Friday's meeting, of unprecedented length took place at the presidential palace in Ankara and was officially devoted to discussing "reactionary activities and terrorism."

Permanent members of the MGK are the head of state, the prime minister, the ministers of defence, interior and foreign affairs and the five most senior commanders of the armed forces who see themselves as the custodians of the secular traditions laid down by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey.

Mr. Erbakan's government, the first Islamic-led coalition in Turkey's modern history, has angered the secular-minded establishment with attempts to challenge that tradition.

Mr. Erbakan's government has rearranged work hours to fit fasting times during the Ramadan and wants to give civil servants 15 minutes off for afternoon prayers.

It also has proposed letting female civil servants wear Islamic-style head-coverings and wants to build a huge mosque in one of Istanbul's liveliest central squares.

Tolerance for militants groups has increased during Erbakan's tenure. He set off another controversy by inviting leaders of radical sects to a dinner party at his residence.



PROTEST AGAINST SETTLEMENT: A young Palestinian holds aloft the Palestinian flag during a demonstration on Saturday by two hundred Palestinians and Israelis on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem, where Israel plans to begin construction of a Jewish settlement (AFP photo)

UAE plans to build powerful navy, seeks frigates, up to 100 patrol boats

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) plans to buy frigates and other warships in a major armament programme that will substantially bolster its naval power, local press reports said Saturday.

The oil-rich country has already invited bids for an unspecified number of frigates, six patrol boats and up to 100 coastal craft, and is considering buying small submarines, the reports said.

"The acquisition programme will significantly enhance the navy's defence capability," the reports said, quoting defence industry sources.

The six patrol attack boats will cost around \$600 million and have drawn competition from Britain, Germany and the United States, it said.

It said shipyards had been given until March 2 to submit their bids, adding that Vosper Thornycroft of Britain and Germany's Lürssen were the strongest candidates to win the contract, one of the biggest naval deals in the Gulf.

The navy is expected to shortlist at least two companies during the March 16-20 international defence show in Abu Dhabi.

"It will start negotiations with one of them while keeping its options open to enter into negotiations with the other," the paper said.

It said the vessels would bolster the UAE's capability of surface surveillance and interception missions and enable it to counter a perceived threat from Iran, which has acquired three Russian Kilo-class submarines.

The navy's plans also include the purchase of an unspecified number of Corvettes of between 95 and 100 metres long and up to 100 coastal patrol craft between 15 and 20 metres in length, the paper said.

The navy has also issued requests for information on six minehunters and small submarines to enhance its defence and patrol capabilities.

"They will possibly play a role in ensuring the free flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz," the newspaper said.

The UAE has sought to beef up its army since the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Officials have said weapons purchases could reach between \$6 billion and \$7 billion over the next few years.

FBI chief is still frustrated over Saudi probe — report

NEW YORK (AFP) — Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Director Louis Freeh is so frustrated by lack of Saudi cooperation in the probe of a deadly truck bombing that he made his thoughts known at a lunch in honour of Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan, the New York Times reported Saturday.

The daily said that Mr. Freeh told guests sitting his table during a private luncheon for Prince Sultan Thursday that delays in getting key evidence were hampering the investigation.

The truck bombing last June killed 19 U.S. airmen at Khobar Towers, a U.S. military housing complex in Dhahran.

Mr. Freeh told guests at the luncheon, which was hosted by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, that immediately after the bombing the United States requested access to a vehicle believed to have been

used by extremists, the Times said.

He said the Saudis did not grant the United States access to the vehicle until the week of Feb. 17 — probably because of the impending visit of Prince Sultan, whose luncheon he was attending.

He said that because such a long time had passed since the bombing and so many people had gone over the physical evidence that the access ended up not providing any useful leads in the probe, the Times added.

On the day of the luncheon, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters that the Saudis had promised "full cooperation" in U.S. efforts to investigate the terrorist bombing.

"We were very pleased to receive these assurances, and we are counting on continued Saudi cooperation in the future," Mr. Burns said.

Bomb-laden car explodes in Bahrain; no casualties

MANAMA (Agencies) — A bomb-laden car exploded Saturday in a downtown district near government ministries and international financial institutions.

There were no casualties and the blast damaged only the 1980 model Toyota Corona that contained the bomb, said police officers on the scene.

The blast in the diplomatic area was set off at 9:00 a.m. (0600GMT) by a timing device attached to a container filled with gasoline, one officer at the scene said.

The explosion occurred at a parking lot a few metres from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance and National Economy.

The Saudi embassy, and the main offices of the Bahrain-based Arab Banking Corporation and Investcorp also are nearby.

Since December 1994, Bahrain has been wracked by political violence by Shiite Muslims demanding a return of a parliament dissolved two decades and greater job opportunities.

Nobody claimed responsibility for the blast. Anti-government activists have used similar methods to pressure authorities to release political prisoners.

Hundreds of activists have been rounded up in the violence that has included bombings and arson attacks at hotels, restaurants and bank machines. More than 30 people have been reported killed in the violence.

A slight majority of Bahrain's 400,000 citizens are Shiites. Bahrain has accused Iran of being behind the unrest,

but Iran, which is overwhelmingly Shiite, denies the charge.

Some 81 members of an Iranian-backed group known as Hizbollah-Bahrain accused plotting to overthrow the Bahraini government was to go on trial in Manama on Saturday, lawyers said.

The lawyers, questioned by AFP from Nicosia on Friday, said 54 of the accused will appear before the state security court while another 27 who are still at large will be tried in their absence.

The defendants face charges of conspiring against the government, conspiring with a foreign state and attempting to overthrow the regime by force, the lawyers said.

If they are found guilty, they could face the death penalty and there is no appeal from the state security court.

There was no immediate official confirmation of the trial. Last June, Bahrain publicly announced the arrests of 29 militants and accused Iran of having armed and financed Hizbollah-Bahrain in a bid to overthrow the government.

More were arrested later. Tehran denied the charges. In October, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Ben Mubarak Al Khalifa said relations with Iran had improved following Syrian mediation.

Political unrest erupted in Bahrain in December 1994. At least 26 people, including police officers, have been killed in the violence.

JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 ...Cartoon — Jonny Quest
14:30 ...Cartoon — Problem Child
15:00 ...French Programmes
16:00 ...Doc. — Global Family
16:30 ...Energy Express
16:50 ...Doc. — Our World, Their World
17:00 ...News Flash
17:15 ...Varieties and All Our Children
18:00 ...French Programmes
19:30 ...News Headlines
19:35 ...Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 ...Doc. — World Echo
20:30 ...Medical Drama — Side Effects
21:10 ...Doc. — Tycoons
22:00 ...News in English
22:25 ...Hot Shots
23:00 ...Sisters

PRAYER TIMES

04:42 ...Fajr
05:59 ...Sunrise (Doha)
11:48 ...Dhuhr
15:04 ...Asr
17:37 ...Maghreb
18:54 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775361.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 824328.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Warm weather conditions will prevail with winds southeasterly moderate. In the evening, clouds will build up, skies becoming cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance of showers. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 06/16
Aqaba 10/25
Deserts 04/21
Jordan Valley 10/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 17, Aqaba 40 Humidity readings: Amman 25 per cent, Aqaba 27 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Ghaleb Zawaideh 736011
Dr. Khalid Asfour 799440
Dr. Bilal Al Sayed 890280
Dr. Awad Al Hawamdeh 833356
Firas pharmacy 661912
Fendous pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Baker 552206
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 985550
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/2
Khalidi Maternity 644281/6
Akileh Maternity 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/25
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09/883323
Zarqa National Hospital 09/900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09/990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02/272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 02/247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03/314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700)

20:30 Cairo (MS)
23:10 Istanbul (TK)
23:50 London, Beirut (BA)
01:25 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
09:20 Aqaba (RW)
18:55 Tel Aviv (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:15 Aqaba (RJ)
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
08:40 Frankfurt (RJ)
09:00 Aqaba, Graz (add) (RJ)
11:00 Tunis (RJ)
11:05 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
11:15 Rome (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:20 Athens (RJ)
20:10 Cairo (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)
21:00 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:10 New Delhi (RJ)
22:10 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:45 Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)
Other Flights
06:30 London (KL)
07:00 Beirut (ME)
07:15 Tel Aviv (LY)
07:35 Damascus, London (BA)
16:15 Doha (Q7)
16:35 Moscow (SU)
21:25 Cairo (MS)
02:30 Amsterdam (KL)

06:00 Istanbul (TK)
Royal Wing (RW) Flights
09:50 Aqaba (RW) (departing from Marka Airport)
20:30 Aqaba (RW)

HUAZ RAILWAY TRAIN
Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Apple 700/500
Banana 600/600
Banana (imported) 1000/900
Cabbage 100/40
Carrot 180/120
Cauliflower 380/200
Cucumber (large) 160/100
Cucumber (small) 240/150
Eggplant 270/140
Fava beans 850/600
Garlic 1100/900
Lemon 430/250
Grape fruit 200/100
Marrow (large) 260/150
Marrow (small) 460/200
Onion (green) 180/120
Onion (dry) 200/120
Orange 650/450
Peas 850/500
Pepper (hot) 300/150
Pepper (sweet) 450/300
Potato 340/150
Radish 70/30
Spinach 330/200
String beans 850/650
Tomato 220/120

King, Queen attend fund-raising dinner

AMMAN (J.T.) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor attended a dinner Saturday to raise funds for Jubilee School scholarships, organised by the Noor Al Hussein Foundation at Al Hussein Sports City, according to a Royal Court statement.

In remarks at the dinner, Minister of Education Munther Masri, head of the Jubilee School Steering Committee, maintained that the Jubilee School "selects students from all parts of the Kingdom based solely on merit."

He added that "its Centre for Excellence in Education, which cooperates with the Ministry of Education and other educational institutions, focuses on public and private school teacher training and curriculum development for the entire country."

The Jubilee School Project was first announced in 1977 during Jordan's Silver Jubilee celebrations of King Hussein's accession to the Throne as a tribute to

his development efforts, notably in the field of education, the statement said.

The idea was concretised four years ago, under the umbrella of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, as an independent co-educational secondary school for outstanding students, which emphasises community service, equal opportunities and creative thinking.

The school, temporarily located in a Ministry of Education building, has expanded to include a total student body of 275 students for the 1996-97 scholastic year, the statement said.

Plans for expanding the school are currently underway at its permanent site in Yajouz, outside of Amman.

In addition to boarding facilities, which will enable the school to welcome a larger number of students from remote areas of the Kingdom as well as students from the rest of the Arab World, the campus will also include a comprehensive library providing

students with access to databases worldwide, modern computers, language laboratories, vocational and teacher training centres, a music and drama centre and athletic facilities.

According to the statement, the enrolment of students on a scholarship basis is an important feature of the Jubilee School's egalitarian philosophy.

The Scholarship Fund will provide individual students scholarships from donations of national and international institutions, individuals and financially-able parents. At present, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation covers the cost of all the students at the school, estimated to be JD 2,000 per student annually.

The Building Fund will raise the finances for the second phase of construction of the school's facilities, which will include the auditorium, the human sciences building and the fine and applied arts building, the statement said.

The Jubilee School

reflects the Noor Al Hussein Foundation's philosophy of integrated socio-economic development, sensitive to traditional values and responsive to the needs, talents and aspirations of the people of Jordan, it stated.

As with other foundation projects, the school's innovative approach to education encourages initiative and democratic participation, while contributing to enhance national educational standards. It provides equitable educational opportunities for outstanding students, with a special emphasis on students from less developed areas of the country.

Cultural Secretary to the King HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Mrs. Fatma Kabariti also attended the dinner as did members of the Jubilee School Steering Committee.

Senate denounces Netanyahu's decision to allow construction of settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim

By Maria Bizri
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — During its Saturday session, the Senate denounced Prime Minister Netanyahu's decision to allow the building of more Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem.

Senators yesterday reiterated Jordan's stance on increased settlements in Jerusalem. Their discontent was awfully spurred by Mr. Netanyahu's decision to build 6,500 homes for settlers on Jabal Abu Ghneim.

Minister of Higher Education Dr. Abdullah Ensour told the Senate that during His Majesty King Hussein's upcoming visit to the United States, the issue of the Jerusalem settlements will be of the highest priority in his meetings with U.S. officials.

Dr. Ensour stressed, "His Majesty will utilise his entire capacity to serve Jerusalem and the Holy Places as he has been doing all his life."

He added, "The King, the government, the Parliament and the people of Jordan are united in their position against provocative and illegal Israeli government violations in Jerusalem, its holy sites and land."

Senator Ma'an Abu Nawar stated "His Majesty's stance on the issue of Jerusalem has always been clear and the building of settlements in clear violation of every international law as well as all Arab-Israeli treaties."

He added that "Netanyahu's decision is bound to lead to mistrust and is a serious threat to reaching a just and compre-

hensive peace."

Senator Said Tal also warned of the seriousness of the situation and added that "the building of settlements contradicts the essence of the Madrid Talks, the Oslo Accords and the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty."

Dr. Tal stressed the importance of Jerusalem to all Arabs, maintaining that "the insistence of Israel to build settlements despite Palestinian, Arab, Islamic and international opposition leads to the conclusion that Israel refuses the concept of a just and comprehensive peace."

"I demand that the government take all necessary steps to call a halt to the entire Jordanian-Israeli peace, unless the Israeli government revokes its decision to allow the building of settlements," said

Dr. Tal, stressing the urgency of convening an Arab summit to take a decisive and joint stance on the issue.

Senator Kamel Abu Jaber recommended the initiation of "a national discourse between the Senate, Lower House and executive authorities, an Arab-Islamic summit and the formation of a parliamentary committee to present the issue to the international community at large."

Also during the session, the Senate forwarded the Tourism Draft Law and the 1996 Islamic Lawyers Draft Law to its legal committee as well as the Companies Draft Law to its Financial Committee.

The Senate also adopted the 1995 Jordanian Farmers General Union Draft Law after revising certain articles.

Women join together to create political platform

AMMAN (J.T.) — Women from various institutions, companies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have created a woman voters platform for the 1997 parliamentary elections, according to an Al-Kutba Institute for Human Development (IHD) statement.

On Thursday, 51 participants of a workshop entitled "The role of women in democracy and the 1997 elections," organised by the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation (GKAF), Al Kutba Institute for Human Development, and the Aqaba branch of the General Federation for Jordanian Woman (GFJW), selected five women who will represent the Aqaba region at a national woman's conference scheduled for September 1997 in Amman, in preparation for the parliamentary elections.

At the workshop, aimed at raising women's political awareness and assisting

them in forming a list of issues which they believe need to be addressed in the next parliamentary period, presentations were made by Ellen Khouri from Al Kutba IHD, Lower House deputy and member of the Legal Committee of Parliament Toujan Faisal, Nadia Bushnaq who ran for office in the two previous parliamentary elections and woman activist Khadijah Habashneh Abu Ali, the statement said.

According to Josi Salem-Pickartz from Al Kutba IHD, subsequent to these presentations and discussions amongst participants, the woman formulated a list of urgent issues to be addressed by the new parliament regarding their basic needs.

"The topics listed by the woman were prioritised and ten were chosen to formulate the preliminary woman's platform which follows:

"To achieve a substantial increase of compensation

for women and children in divorce cases.

"To grant Jordanian woman the right to give their nationality to their non-Jordanian husbands and children, to provide husbands and children with residency permits in order to keep families intact.

"To achieve equality in the rights of men and woman to hold professional positions according to qualification and seniority.

"To create a ministry for woman's affairs.

"To amend social security and health insurance laws in order to achieve equal rules and regulations for men and women.

"To provide women with better access to soft loans for income-generating projects.

"To cancel the law of reduced penalty for crimes of honour.

"To create a constitutional court.

"To improve the quality and quantity of medicine, medical equipment and

qualified medical professionals in governmental clinics and hospitals, to make medical treatment affordable for the poor and to prevent the emigration of qualified medical personnel.

"To include the teaching of all laws and regulations that affect women in secondary and preparatory school curricula.

According to Ms. Salem-Pickartz, this platform will serve as a basis for discussion between women voters in Aqaba and candidates for the new parliament, and finding candidates who will support their cause was delineated as the main method for achieving the goals of the platform, the statement said.

Similar workshops for women will be held in Karak, Zarqa and Irbid in the months leading up to the 1997 parliamentary elections, according to the statement.

Ministry approves application for American accredited university

By Sacha Baggili
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An application by the Higher Council for Science and Technology to sponsor an American accredited university in Jordan was approved by the Ministry of Higher Education.

The ministry justified their decision as due to a reported demand for expanded higher educational provisions in the region.

The new institution's licence was granted by the ministry last month and its construction, near the southern beach of Taiba in Aqaba, is expected to begin this year.

The establishment of the university was approved by the Ministry of Higher Education on the condition that it be granted accreditation from the United States.

The ministry also stipulated that the establishment operate as a non-profit institution.

"There is a great demand for higher education in Jordan and the surrounding region. The proposal for an American university in Jordan was approved in the hope that it could respond to this demand," Ministry of Higher Education Under-secretary Ahmad Husban told the Jordan Times.

According to Dr. Husban, difficulties concerning higher education in Jordan can be attributed either to problems of financing or "relevance."

By using the term "relevance", the undersecretary was referring to the current situation of a reported deficit in graduate students fitting the Kingdom's current job market demands. He explained that in

order to alleviate this situation, the field of higher education must exert efforts to "improve the general standard of Jordanian graduates' command of the English language and their ability to work with computers."

According to Dr. Husban, it was the Ministry of Higher Education's opinion that an American university in Jordan, abiding by U.S. accreditation laws, would help fill such gaps and "enrich the huge matrix of higher education in the region."

"We hope that an American university in Jordan will give a push to higher education in this respect, by acting as a model to be emulated," he added.

"Problems with computer literacy are related to financing," he maintained, "and universities generally do need to update their technology, but [Jordanian universities] are currently managing to comply to the minimum standards of computer technology."

"However, we hope that the presence of an American university will help advance computer literacy to a level which exceeds minimum standards," Dr. Husban added.

With regard to the choice of Aqaba, he explained that "it is an attractive region which will also appeal to foreign students and this will therefore benefit the Aqaba community as well as the Jordanian economy."

According to Dr. Husban, the university is slated to specialise in areas relating to Jordan and the Middle East.

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A Jordanian engineer held without charges for two months in Israel was released and crossed the Sheikh Hussein Bridge Thursday where family and friends greeted him on the other side.

After 63 days of detention, Hatem Istanbuli refused to cross the border until Israelis granted him written evidence that their investigation against him was closed.

His request delayed his return by two hours, but friends and family surrounded him with tears and accolades when he walked onto Jordanian soil, and he grabbed his son and cried.

Mr. Istanbuli was arrested on Dec. 26 of last year by the Israeli secret service, Mossad, while crossing the border back to Jordan subsequent to a visit to the West Bank.

According to Mr. Istanbuli, during his 63 days of detention, he was blasted with music without cease "as loud as a disco with barely light, I could barely sleep."

He was arrested at Sheikh Hussein Bridge and held incommunicado for his first 15 days of detention until which time he was permitted legal counsel.

No charges were pressed against him, however, nor were any of his family members allowed access to him.

Mr. Istanbuli was never formally charged although Israeli officials maintained that he was suspected of "links to a terrorist organisation."

The Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) led a strong campaign for the release of Mr. Istanbuli, a



Engineer Hatem Istanbuli Thursday hugs his son at the Sheikh Hussein Bridge after his release from 63 days of Israeli detention (photo by Tanya Habjouqa)

member of the JEA committee against normalisation of relations with Israel. The JEA and Deputy Toujan Faisal accused Israel of detaining him due to these anti-normalisation activities.

Mr. Istanbuli had travelled to the West Bank on a visa issued by the Israeli embassy, and Ms. Faisal had asserted that the issuance of the visa was part of an Israeli machination to detain the activist.

Mr. Istanbuli maintains that his visit to the West Bank was purely entrepreneurial, as he was considering opening a branch of his gold shop in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

"I cut my visit short as I was planning to arrive home in time for my son's birthday," Mr. Istanbuli told the Jordan Times.

During a routine passport check at the border, he was made to wait for half an hour while the Israeli bor-

der patrol chief came and formally arrested him, he asserted.

Military officers handcuffed his hands and legs, placing a sack over his head before escorting him to the detention centre in Jerusalem, he added.

"I was treated like an animal," Mr. Istanbuli said and lifted his pants to show markings which he maintains were the result of shackles encircling his ankles.

When he questioned authorities as to the reasons for his arrest, he was told "for the security of Israel, you are a dangerous man," Mr. Istanbuli stated.

Mr. Istanbuli was repeatedly interrogated about alleged "military activities against Israel and the Jews," he said.

According to Mr. Istanbuli, his repeated pleas to Israeli officials that they file a case in court with evidence of his alleged mili-

tary activities were ignored.

"The Israelis consistently drilled me about my activities, alleging that I was active in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP)," he said.

Mr. Istanbuli asserted that while he still had friends in the PLFP, he has not been a member of that organisation since he was a student in Romania.

After repeated extensions on his detention, one court finally ordered his release after 48 hours, unless evidence of his terrorist affiliations was submitted to the court.

The Head of Shin Bet then met with Mr. Istanbuli's lawyer and agreed to release him, although denying him entry to Israel for the next 23 years, Mr. Istanbuli asserted.

"I am not allowed back into the country where I was born; I wonder just what kind of peace we have with Israel," he concluded.

Montreal Fund allocates \$2.364 m to Kingdom

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Montreal Fund, created by developed nations in 1987 to finance the use of ozone-friendly substances in Third World countries, has this year given Jordan \$2.364 million to subsidise such projects, Deputy Director of the General Corporation for Environmental Protection (GCEP) Ghazi Oudat announced Saturday.

He added that six local industries will be participating in the project.

A total of 13 Jordanian industries have heretofore benefited from the Montreal Fund and the process of substituting ozone-harmful substances for ozone-friendly ones is scheduled to be completed during 1997, Mr. Oudat explained.

Mr. Oudat listed the companies benefiting from this aid as the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, the Mithibeh Haddad Company, the Sukhtian Company, Qola Ghazi Industries, Middle East Engineering

Industries, the National Refrigeration Company and the Hamco Refrigeration Company, the Five Stars Sponge Company, the Arab Sponge Company, the National Sponge Manufacturing Company, Jordan Plastics, the Jordanian Industrial and Chemical Company, Jordanian Chemicals, and the Abdeen Company.

According to Mr. Oudat, five new firms will sign agreements with the Montreal Fund this year to obtain additional assistance estimated at \$1.9 million for similar purposes.

According to the institution, chemical substances used to date in refrigeration and air-conditioning have been found to be pernicious to the protective atmospheric layer and Jordan has been requesting aid to finance new procedures utilising safer substances.

VTC states goal of training 150,000 students in time for new millennium

AMMAN (Petra) — The Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) is striving to provide vocational training to 150,000 students by the year 2000, VTC Director Ali Nasrallah announced Saturday.

Trainee enrolment in various VTC centres for 1997 has reached 20,000, Mr. Nasrallah added.

The corporation has developed a strategy, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, to expand training programmes and introduce new courses by the year 2000 to provide training to at least 50 per cent of the total number of male students and 35 per cent of all female students who finish high school.

The main aim of these courses is to meet the needs and requirements of the local labour market and replace non-Jordanian workers with qualified and trained Jordanian job seekers, Mr. Nasrallah added. Referring to foreign aid to

the VTC, Mr. Nasrallah said that Japan has undertaken the training of 23 Jordanian engineers and instructors and set up an institute for metal industries at Sahab Industrial City at the cost of JD 4 million.

The VTC is preparing designs for the construction of a chemical industries training centre in the eastern Amman district of Marka which France has pledged to finance through a grant totalling \$3.3 million, he explained.

The organisation is also currently preparing designs and finalising studies on the creation of vocational centres at Mazar near the southern city of Karak and another at Abu Nusair in western Amman for female trainees.

He said that the Jordanian Armed Forces workshops have promised to provide training to 700 students annually.

What's Going On EXHIBITIONS

* Display of Jordanian children's drawings at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman, until March 4.

* Works by artists Chao Song-Yun, Li Chi-Mao, and Shen Chien at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Art, until March 4.

* Works by artist Amanda Shehadeh at the French Cultural Centre, until March 6.

Primakov says NATO deal may not be ready by July

LONDON (R) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov Friday suggested a controversial deal governing ties between Moscow and NATO might not be ready for signing at a crucial alliance summit in July.

To minimise what it sees as the risks of the 16-nation alliance's planned expansion, Moscow wants a legally binding charter to regulate its links with NATO which would allow Russia veto rights in some areas of policy.

Although Washington opposes this concept, NATO chiefs are confident some kind of deal can be struck before the July summit in Madrid which will formally invite a number of former Soviet allies to start talks on membership.

But Mr. Primakov, asked whether he thought the document would be ready for signing in July, told reporters:

"Of course, most of all we would like a binding document on our relations to be agreed as fast as possible."

"But at the same time, we don't want the goal of the document to be an end in itself. The signature of

the document and the quality should not contradict each other," he said after talks with British Foreign Minister Malcolm Rifkind.

Moscow has consistently opposed NATO expansion on the grounds that Russian security would be threatened if former Warsaw Pact countries were allowed into the 16-nation bloc.

Mr. Primakov later accused the West of being duplicitous, noting that senior leaders had assured Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991 that NATO had no intention of enlarging. Moscow subsequently withdrew its troops from east Germany.

"We have a question: Why did the West deceive us? Why did it change its tune? Does democratic Russia really pose more of a military threat than the Soviet Union during the cold war? Of course not. Then why is NATO being expanded?" he asked.

"We have strategic nuclear missiles which are not aimed at targets in the West ... But if we increased their numbers, would the West applaud?" he said in a speech to the Royal Institute

of International Affairs.

"We would say 'come off it, they aren't aimed at you', but we wouldn't hear any applause. Why do they want us to applaud the expansion of NATO when it wants to expand its infrastructure towards our territory?"

Senior Western officials say Moscow's hard line is intended primarily for inter-speech. NATO has no intention of scrapping its expansion plans.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin accepts expansion might go ahead but says Moscow plans to stall it for as long as possible.

Mr. Primakov said he and Mr. Rifkind had discussed how to limit the damage which could be caused by NATO expansion rather than the enlargement plans themselves.

"I don't want to give the impression we have reached agreement in all our discussions. We know each other's positions better. The meeting was useful and our negotiations will continue," he said.

Moscow still wants the final document to be legally binding and to be ratified by

the parliaments in all 16 member states, a concept NATO opposes.

"We favour ratification. We do not see any reasons why this document should not be ratified. No one has said that the ratification by the 16 parliaments of the new nato members is a hindrance to their membership," Mr. Primakov said.

The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are widely expected to be the top three countries on NATO's invitation list.

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana will visit Moscow on April 8 and 9 for a new round of talks on a new deal with Russia ahead of the alliance's planned eastwards enlargement, alliance officials said Friday.

The officials declined to give other details of the visit in which Mr. Solana will follow up two previous rounds of talks with Mr. Primakov on a Russia-NATO charter or document.

The announcement of more talks follows an intensive bout of diplomacy in recent weeks.



Delegates fill their places in Beijing's Great Hall of the People during the opening session of the National People's Congress or parliament in the hall Saturday (Reuters photo)

China's top leadership calls for unity around Jiang

BEIJING (AFP) — China's premier and parliament chairman — both well placed to fight any possible succession battle — pledged loyalty Saturday to Deng Xiaoping's anointed successor President Jiang Zemin.

Parliament Chairman Qiao Shi led the call for unity with an opening speech to the 2,808 delegates to the National People's Congress (NPC) in the Great Hall of the People.

"NPC deputies should turn their grief into strength, carry work forward at the behest of Deng Xiaoping and unite closely around the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee with Mr. Jiang at the core," Mr. Qiao said.

It was his first time Mr. Qiao, 72, had publicly pledged loyalty to Mr. Jiang since the death of Deng on Feb. 19, after making two previous statements lauding the patriarch which did not mention his successor.

According to a secret CIA report published in the Washington Times after Deng's death, Mr. Qiao has been "openly critical" of Mr. Jiang and the president is being "buffeted by both wings of the party."

Mr. Qiao's loyalty pledge was followed by an almost identically-worded promise from Premier Li Peng in his government work report to the NPC.

"Under the leadership of the party Central Committee with comrade Jiang Zemin at its core, we must keep in mind our fundamental interests, continue our efforts, unite and work as one," he said.

Mr. Li has already declared his loyalty to Jiang, but with his term as premier ending in 1998, his future is uncertain and analysts predict there is an outside chance he could be involved in a succession battle.

However, in his first major speech since the patriarch's death, Mr. Li was clear that the economic reforms started by Deng should be continued and deepened, with an overhaul

of the state sector number one priority.

He also called for ethnic unity after a series of Muslim separatist bomb attacks in the northwest region of Xinjiang killed seven and wounded 67.

Consolidating and developing ethnic unity "is the common aspiration in the fundamental interests of people of all nationalities in China," Mr. Li said.

"We should ... resolutely oppose any words or acts designed to split the country or damage ethnic unity."

On the sensitive issue of Taiwan, the premier emphasised Beijing's desire for peaceful reunification with the renegade island instead of last year's threat to invade.

His words contrasted directly with the parliament address he gave last year when he warned that China had "not ruled out using force to reunite Taiwan with the motherland."

Only four days after Mr. Li's 1996 address, China started a series of war

games in the Taiwan Strait which were aimed at intimidating pro-independence supporters ahead of the island's first direct presidential elections.

Regional tensions rose swiftly and were only dispated when the United States dispatched two aircraft carriers to the region.

The NPC has long been regarded as a rubber-stamp body as it meets for only two weeks a year and approves almost every motion put before it.

But under the stewardship of Mr. Qiao, the parliament has started to develop some teeth by sending out its own teams to inspect the work of the government and forcing amendments to a number of laws needing its approval.

This session, the fifth session of the eighth congress, has a 13-point agenda which includes amendments to the criminal law and a proposal to turn the southwestern city of Chongqing into a municipality with the same status as a province.

Yeltsin criticises government budget; no clues on reshuffle

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, making a comeback after illness, sharply criticised his own government Friday for producing a "bad budget" and said he would have to take finance matters into his own hands to avert a crisis.

In a brief radio address, the 66-year-old Kremlin leader said he was not sure the 1997 budget was realistic but had signed it reluctantly to avoid political turmoil. He gave few clues, however, on a cabinet reshuffle expected for next week.

He avoided personal criticism of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who some media reports say could be sacked. Calling for reforms of the bloated and disintegrating armed forces, Mr. Yeltsin made no mention of Defence Minister Igor Rodionov, another target of the media's reshuffle speculation.

"I have just signed Russia's 1997 budget. I'll tell you straight it was not an easy decision," he said. "There are very major doubts over whether the budget can be fulfilled."

The government had failed to prepare it properly and put in an array of "unre-

alistic articles," Mr. Yeltsin said, before the Communist-dominated State Duma lower house of parliament made things worse with amendments inspired by "populism."

But he said: "I signed it with a heavy heart. Because to send back the budget today would have meant pushing the political situation in the country to the limits of bitterness."

"A new wave of instability would hurt our most defenceless citizens hardest of all," he said, adding it would have placed economic recovery in peril and fueled inflation.

"A bad budget is no excuse to give up," Mr. Yeltsin said.

"But the main conclusion for the future is the president must much more closely control the process of preparing the 1998 budget, otherwise we'll end up like we are today."

The most obvious victim of such a vicious attack could be Finance Minister Alexander Livshits.

Avoiding a direct personal attack on the prime minister, Mr. Yeltsin said only: "Viktor Stepanovich Chernomyrdin has reported that even within the framework

of the budget that was passed, it is possible to meet promises to pay people."

Russian media have speculated the 58-year-old premier, an icon of stability for the business community and foreign investors, could be sacked after Mr. Yeltsin's annual state of the nation address to parliament next Thursday, March 6.

Millions of Russians are still waiting for pensions and wages long after the president promised during last year's reelection campaign that all the backlogs would be paid off.

However, other reports suggest a lack of viable alternatives to Mr. Chernomyrdin means that the former Soviet state gas company boss will continue to lead the government on a cautiously reformist course, as he has since December 1992.

Devoting half his four-minute radio speech to defence matters, Mr. Yeltsin reaffirmed his intention to end conscription.

"Russia will have a professional army. Only this will enable us to maintain the combat ability of the armed forces and the potential for nuclear deterrence in the 21st century."

Irish premier tells IRA to drop force

BELFAST (R) — Irish Prime Minister John Bruton paid a visit to Northern Ireland Friday and told IRA guerrillas to stop trying to unite the two islands by force.

Mr. Bruton, on a visit to the border country of Fermanagh, told reporters that the Irish Republican movement should embrace the idea that Northern Ireland's Protestant majority could not be coerced into a unified Ireland.

His words were aimed at Irish Republican Army guerrillas and their Sinn Fein political wing, who seek to end British rule of Northern Ireland to unite it with the Irish Republic.

Mr. Bruton said that if the two could agree to the principle of consent, it would put new life into Belfast peace talks which have long been stalled on the issue of disarming the IRA and its Protestant foes, loyalist guerrilla groups.

"If the Republican Movement can definitively say that coercion of a majority in Northern Ireland is never going to happen and is wrong in principle, the issue of decommissioning of arms is much less difficult to solve," he said.

Sinn Fein is excluded from the Belfast talks because of the IRA's return to war one year ago when the guerrillas ended a 17-month ceasefire.

It has not publicly agreed with British and Irish government statements that say that the status of Northern Ireland will not change until the majority there wants it.

Sinn Fein and Irish Republicans argue that Northern Ireland is an illegal colonial throwback and say that a majority of people on the island want the two reunited.

Mr. Bruton, whose country's constitution lays claim to Northern Ireland, said that the issue of consent was central to Dublin's role in Anglo-Irish efforts to forge a negotiated settlement to a conflict that has killed 3,200 in 28 years.

He said the Belfast talks, which group pro-British Unionists and the pro-Irish SDLP Catholic-backed party, were the only route to a settlement and dismissed calls that they should be abandoned because of the snail's pace of negotiation.

Clinton's party returns \$1.5 million in donations

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton's Democratic Party announced Friday it was returning another \$1.5 million in campaign donations deemed improper and said new rules are in place designed to prevent future abuses.

Most of the money being refunded, party officials said at a news conference, was solicited by three Asian-Americans — former Democratic fundraiser and Commerce Department official John Huang, California businessman Johnny Chung and Clinton friend and Little Rock businessman Charles Yeh Lin Trie.

All three are central figures in investigations by the Justice Department, House of Representatives and Senate committees and the Federal Election Commission into questionable campaign contributions to the Democrats for the 1996 presidential election.

The new funds being returned bring to nearly \$3 million the amount refunded since the election to donors or if they could not be found, the U.S. Treasury, because they were considered illegal, inappropriate or questionable after a review.

Of \$2.97 million refunded

since the election, officials said 75.3 per cent was raised by Mr. Huang, Mr. Chung and Mr. Trie.

The White House termed the refunds, which were made and announced separately by the party leadership group, the Democratic National Committee, as "the appropriate thing."

"We will return contributions from 77 donors totalling \$1.5 million," the party's new chairman, Governor Roy Romer of Colorado, said at a news conference. "That's a serious amount but it's a small percentage of the overall amount raised."

"Our system broke down and we have fixed it," said Steve Grossman, a Massachusetts businessman who serves as a co-chairman with Mr. Romer and runs day-to-day party affairs.

A new system to "apply a new discipline" to fundraising procedures and improve efforts to check contributors includes barring money from non-citizens even if they live legally here, acceptance of over \$100,000 a year from any donor or accepting money from a U.S. subsidiary of a foreign company.

In addition, the rules,

some announced earlier, include barring fundraisers at a religious site, such as the Buddhist temple near Los Angeles where Vice President Al Gore attended last April when \$140,000 was collected.

In the new batch of refunds made public, some \$64,050 from that Buddhist event was being returned.

Under new party guidelines a compliance board will review, or vet, contributors invited to White House events or dinners with Mr. Clinton or Mr. Gore to weed out questionable people.

The new refunds came after the Democratic National Committee (DNC) ordered an audit conducted by a national accounting firm and outside law firm of all its donations, which amounted to some \$207 million to the DNC for the 1996 election.

Many of the names of donors and companies getting refunds had Asian names and the officials at the news conference gave only general reasons why money was returned, saying they did not want to violate the privacy of many of the contributors.

"Contributions were received a) if they did not meet legal requirements b) if the lack of information made a determination of legality impossible or c) if it was deemed inappropriate for the DNC (Democratic National Committee) to retain the contribution," said Judah Best, a senior partner in the law firm of Debevoise and Plimpton, which conducted an audit of the Democratic fundraising at the party's request.

He said the DNC went along with the firm's recommendations.

"It is clear that we did not monitor the contribution process adequately enough in the recent past," Mr. Romer said. "The DNC made mistakes, and we put in place a thorough and rigorous monitoring system that will prevent those kinds of problems in the future."

The announcement was the latest in a series of revelations on Democratic Party fundraising that have dogged Mr. Clinton.

On Tuesday the White House released memos showing Mr. Clinton took a leading role in efforts to woo major party financial supporters by inviting them to special White House events.

CIA agent to plead guilty to spying for Russians

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The highest-ranking CIA agent ever charged with spying for Russia will plead guilty to espionage, the Washington Post reported Saturday.

Harold James Nicholson, 46, signed an agreement to plead guilty Monday to passing top-secret information to the Russians, the Post reported. In exchange, Mr. Nicholson would face a likely prison sentence of between 25 to 30 years, the daily said, quoting an unnamed source, instead of life imprisonment.

Mr. Nicholson was considered a model agent be-

fore being charged last November with selling top-secret U.S. intelligence information — including the identity of agents he trained — to Moscow for some \$180,000.

The 16-year CIA veteran, the most senior CIA agent ever to face such accusations, allegedly spied for Russia from June 1994 to mid-November 1996, when he was arrested at Washington's Dulles Airport. Officials said he was trying to fly to Switzerland to meet with his Russian handlers.

On Friday, FBI agent Earl Edwin Pitts pleaded guilty to espionage, admitting he

passed U.S. secrets to the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.

In a hearing in a federal court in nearby Alexandria, Virginia, Mr. Pitts admitted that he had passed U.S. secrets to the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.

The Post reported that Mr. Pitts would likely face as little as 15 to 20 years in prison as a result of pleading guilty and sparing the government the cost and effort of a trial.

In exchange for money, Mr. Pitts, 43, told the court: "(I) provided information which I believed to be classified ... to persons I be-

lieved to be agents of the USSR."

Mr. Pitts agreed to pay to the U.S. government the money he earned during his career as a spy — about \$250,000 — and also pay a \$500,000 fine. Mr. Pitts also agreed that he would provide investigators with every detail of his espionage.

In exchange, the government dropped 10 of 12 charges that had been lodged against him. During the hearing, prosecutors acknowledged that Mr. Pitts did not turn over any top-secret documents to the Russians.

French government emerges big winner in immigration debate

PARIS (R) — France's conservative government is a big winner in a bitter parliamentary battle on immigration, but the far-right National Front could gain even more in the long run as it is leading public opinion on the issue, analysts said Friday.

The opposition Socialists, on the other hand, appeared to have lost the struggle. They initially appeared hesitant to take on the government on immigration, then entered the picture late and disorganised, only to ultimately lose the key National Assembly vote to a unified centre-right majority, the analysts said.

Also tarnished in the debate was France's international image, they said.

The nation which prides itself as the cradle of human rights has emerged with a distinctly xenophobic cast as a result of the lengthy parliamentary consideration of the government's bill to clamp down on illegal immigration, which cleared the National Assembly Thursday.

The measure now goes to the Senate for a final reading.

France will undergo a new round of soul-searching and

global scrutiny during the final Senate reading of the bill, set to begin on March 11, as the bill's foes have called for street protests.

A peaceful march last Saturday attracted some 100,000 protesters though a second demonstration three days later led to clashes with riot police after some marchers threw rocks.

Gaullist President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppe, who have in the past tied the centre-right majority in knots with clumsy manoeuvring on other hot issues, pushed the contested immigration measure through the assembly with solid coalition support.

Opinion polls showed immediate dividends for the two men in the form of rising approval ratings.

Also gaining points during the three days of often acrimonious assembly debate was Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debre, who galvanised the majority with his brash rhetoric.

But in the end, it was Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front which stood to reap the greatest harvest from the immigration controversy, the analysts said.

The fiercely anti-immigration party, which blames

foreigners for near-record unemployment, growing social welfare deficits and rising violent crime, succeeded in setting the national agenda by making immigration into a top issue 13 months ahead of a March 1998 general election.

"In moving forward in a disorganised and divided fashion, without consulting with one another, we — both politicians and the organisations (opposed to the bill) — have been collectively fooling ourselves," said Patrick Gaubert, an anti-racism activist and former French official, writing in the daily Liberation.

"The result is undoubtedly Toulon, Orange, Marignane and Vitrolles," Mr. Gaubert said, naming the four French towns that have fallen into National Front hands in municipal elections since 1995.

The immigration bill triggered a broad emotional debate on racism and xenophobia, the kind of debate that France's intellectuals traditionally adore.

But in this case, opinion polls found the intellectuals to be on the losing side.



Los Angeles Police Department officers (left) confer over the body of an armed robbery suspect that lies covered in front of his getaway vehicle, after being gunned down by police following a bank robbery attempt in North Hollywood, California. The suspect tried to hijack the truck on left, his automatic weapon is visible below the truck. Two suspects are dead, eight officers and three civilians are wounded from the day long drama north west of Los Angeles (Reuters photo)

California bank robbers killed in shootout

LOS ANGELES (R) — In scenes reminiscent of a Hollywood movie, two bank robbers dressed in black fatigues and wearing body armour were killed by police Friday in a wild shootout captured on live television.

Ten police officers and five civilians were wounded before police in riot gear, armed with automatic weapons and backed by armoured vehicles, fanned out looking for at least one other suspect.

Several hours later a man was seen being handcuffed and taken to the police command centre, but it was not known if he was one of the bank robbery suspects who got away.

"They were shooting at anything. Anything that moved," said one man who was caught in the crossfire.

Witnesses said as many as six robbers dressed in black fatigues and ski masks had walked into a bank in North Hollywood around 9 a.m.

local time (1700 GMT) firing automatic weapons. They apparently triggered an alarm and when police arrived, they began shooting at officers.

The entire incident, including bursts of automatic weapons fire, was captured on videotape by news helicopters and shown live on local television stations.

"A firefight occurred that was horrendous. The suspects continued to fire at officers who were undergunned for over an hour," police spokesman Commander Tim McBride said. They had "no sense of conscience, no sense of dignity, no sense of respect for life."

He said the gunmen wore full body armour and were armed with AK-47 automatic weapons with armour piercing bullets that can penetrate bullet-proof vests at 200 metres.

Earlier outside the bank one of the suspects was seen

on TV nonchalantly firing with an automatic rifle at police in the parking lot as another suspect in a white car drove off with the trunk and driver's side door open.

In one graphic image, a robber was seen firing a handgun at police and then falling dead on the sidewalk after he was hit in the head by police fire.

Another gunman was seen firing an automatic rifle through the windshield of a car at three officers crouching behind their squad car. He then surrendered to police in the residential neighbourhood and was believed to have died later.

Cmdr. McBride said two of the suspects, believed to have carried out previous bank robberies in Los Angeles, were killed by police. "There is one additional suspect, there may be more, and they are extremely dangerous," he told reporters.

At least eight officers had injuries, he said, but none

was life-threatening. Police later said 10 officers were hurt, including one shot in the parking lot and shown on TV being dragged to safety by fellow officers and bundled into a squad car.

Five civilians were injured — three by gunshots and one in a traffic accident with a police car.

Armando Jimenez, who was entering the bank as the robbery occurred, said many people did not realise anything untoward was happening in an area where filmmaking is not unusual.

"Everyone thought it was a (car) backfire. People were still using the automatic teller machine (ATM) as the automatic fire was going on."

"I was so scared. There were six men and two cars. They covered their faces and then they shot. As soon as they shot I knew it was a robbery," Mr. Jimenez told local KABC Television.

9 killed in Albanian riots; parliament to meet

TIRANA (AFP) — Nine people were killed in riots that broke out overnight in the tense southern port of Vlore as thousands of angry people stormed an army barracks, seized weapons and clashed with secret police.

The violence signalled a bloody turn for the worse in weeks of anti-government demonstrations across the country over the collapse of risky investment schemes in which thousands of Albanians lost their life savings.

Six of the dead were members of the secret police, or SHIK. Three were burnt alive when rioters set fire to SHIK headquarters and the others beaten to death, the official ATA news agency said. Three civilians were killed, hospital sources said, and 30 people were injured, three of them seriously.

Parliament, which was to meet in emergency session at 11 a.m. (1000 GMT) to decide how to deal with the crisis, postponed its session for two hours for a meeting of deputies of the ruling Democratic Party.

Forty-one students have

been on hunger strike since Feb. 20 at the Vlore campus to demand the government's resignation over the saving schemes.

A rumour that SHIK was about to forcibly evacuate the hunger strikers was the spark that set off the rioting, which follows 24 straight days of anti-government protests here over the bankrupt savings schemes. Witnesses reached by telephone described the situation in Vlore as an "uprising".

Chaos was further fueled by the absence of security troops which cleared out of Vlore more than two weeks ago following violent clashes in which four people died and 150 were injured. One man, Aladi Zensli, told AFP trucks filled with armed men firing bursts of automatic weapons were roaming around the city, while others were manning a 12.7 calibre machine-gun they had set up outside the university.

The director of Vlore Hospital, Servet Kojdhehi, said four bodies, three civilians and a secret policeman, had been brought into the morgue.

Witnesses said officers and soldiers in the army barracks, located on high ground outside the town, had put up no resistance when the rioters stormed the installation. Twenty-seven trucks carrying dozens of armed people later took part in the assault on the SHIK headquarters, launching grenades that set the building ablaze, ATA said.

The secret police, who called the rioters "terrorists," retaliated by opening fire on the attackers, the agency said. Four people, including a 14-year-old boy hit in the chest, were shot dead and dozens injured in the firing, according to hospital sources quoted by local inhabitants.

On Friday night in Tirana, the government said it had asked courts to rule the student hunger-strike illegal when the case was heard Saturday. In response to the announcement, about 1,000 people armed with rifles and knives surged onto the streets and headed for the university. They then made for SHIK headquarters in the port area. The crowd swelled to around 10,000

people after rumours spread that the government had proclaimed a state of emergency in Vlore. The crowd turned on the SHIK headquarters with stones, fired shots and hurled grenades at the building, setting it on fire, witnesses said.

Arben Rama, a student leader in Vlore said the hunger strikers were determined to continue their protest and would not recognise the court's decision.

In the southeastern town of Gjirokastra 46 students were also on a hunger strike. Several hundred people were gathered outside the town's university on Saturday.

Students and demonstrators in Vlore are demanding that the government step down and reimburse people who lost their life savings in the high-risk investment company Gjallica which went bust last month.

The Gjallica firm reportedly owed 90,000 investors \$145 million, but had assets of just \$30 million. In Tirana, Interior Minister Halit Shamata, questioned by AFP denied there was a plan to declare a state of emergency in Vlore.

Italy anti-fraud police break up fake art ring

ROME (R) — Italian police said Friday they had broken up a ring that sold collectors, galleries and possibly museums tens of millions of dollars worth of paintings falsely attributed to masters such as Titian and Picasso.

They told a news conference that 32 people in eight central and northern Italian cities had been warned they were under investigation as part of an inquiry codenamed "Operation Titian." No arrests had been made so far.

More than 100 oil paintings, etchings and statues had been confiscated along with dozens of fake rubber stamps and seals of museums, galleries and art experts.

"We also found documentation that an incredible number of works of art have already been bought by unwitting collectors and

perhaps even by foreign museums," Colonel Elio Cirillo of the Finance Police's anti-fraud unit said.

He declined to name the museums that may have become victims of the fraud.

Col. Cirillo said the ring had sold tens of millions of dollars worth of false artworks through the scam.

The ring acquired old works painted in the school of masters such as Titian and then, using old typewriters, rubber stamps and seals, falsified authentication certificates that included signatures of known museum curators and galleries.

They also obtained more recently produced fakes of paintings and etchings and attributed them to artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso, and Giorgio De Chirico.

One confiscated painting

displayed at the news conference, "The Holy Family With Two Gift-Bearers," was believed to have been painted by an unknown artist some 60 years after Titian died in 1576.

The ring acquired the painting and later falsified two authentication certificates — one attributed to a curator of medieval art from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the other to a well-known Italian art expert.

The false certificates for the Titian were dated 1971 and 1979 but produced recently using aged paper, old typewriters, false rubber stamps and seal embossing machines.

One of the false certificates for the Titian read: "I examined the painting reproduced herein, representing the sacred family with two noblemen... (it) is in our opinion, as has

already been confirmed by other experts, by the Italian master, Tiziano (Titian) Vecellio (1488/90-1576). Having seen this work of art in the Solomon Collection, I know it well."

Col. Cirillo said the ring was headed by a man who once owned an art gallery in Milan.

"He ran the illegal traffic by using a network of people who sought out well-heeled buyers (through contacts with) restorers, owners of other galleries and auction houses in northern Italy," Col. Cirillo said.

The investigation began last August when police discovered a bronze bas-relief falsely attributed to Italian artist Giacomo Manzù and which the ring tried to sell for 100 million lire (\$60,000).

Aid workers quit Kisangani as Zairean rebels claim strategic town

KISANGANI, Zaire (AFP) — U.N. and non-governmental aid agencies pulled out their representatives from the north-eastern Zairean city of Kisangani Saturday for security reasons as rebels claimed a strategic town on the Zaire River.

The authorities denied the claim by rebel radio that Kindu, the site of a crucial air base used by government forces in their bid to contain the sweeping rebel advances in eastern Zaire, had fallen.

If the claim were confirmed, Kindu would provide the rebels with their first access to the Zaire River, several hundred kilometres upstream of Kisangani, the country's third city.

All aid workers were flown out of Kisangani amid reports that the rebels were advancing on the city.

An AFP correspondent saw two flights leave for Kinshasa at around 9:00 a.m. (0800 GMT).

In Geneva a spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said the last aid workers, including five representatives of the refugee agency and two members of the World Food Programme (WFP), left later aboard a third flight.

A total of 57 aid workers left the city, including workers with the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), and non-governmental French group Doctors Without Borders.

A WFP spokeswoman in Nairobi, Michele Quintaglie, said the aid workers had been relocated "as a precautionary measure due to signs of increasing insecurity in (the refugee camp of) Tingi-Tingi and Kisangani... We hope to be able to return once security permits."

The city remained calm but officials feared the evacuation of the aid workers could spark panic among the population.

Earlier, Voice of the People radio in the rebel stronghold Goma said rebel forces were "chasing the last enemy soldiers out of Kindu."

It said there was still sporadic fighting in the town and that the Interahamwe militia — Rwandan Hutu extremists — who were injured in fighting had been taken to a hospital in Goma.

The Zairean Defence Ministry repeated a claim made Friday that Kindu remained in government hands, despite reports by well-informed regional sources, quoted by the U.N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Nairobi, that the rebels had taken the strategic town Thursday.

The loss of Kindu, a transport hub with links to Zaire's rail and river networks, would represent a major setback for

the government.

The evacuation of Kisangani came amid reports that the rebels were preparing to seize the Tingi Tingi refugee camp, 250 kilometres to the southeast.

Aid groups believed that the camp with its estimated 160,000 refugees would quickly empty, which meant they no longer had to take the risk of remaining in Kisangani.

Aid officials in Geneva said late Friday that some of the refugees in the camp had begun to drift into the surrounding bush, though it was not clear Saturday whether the refugees were yet on the move in significant numbers. A further estimated 200,000 refugees are believed to be living rough in the outlying forest.

Rebel leader Laurent Kabila had warned that his forces would attack Tingi-Tingi if government forces continued to arm Rwandan Hutus from the camp to help in the battle against the rebels.

A spokesman for the French group Doctors Without Borders, speaking as the aid workers began arriving in Kinshasa, said the reason for the evacuation from Kisangani was that the humanitarian personnel "had no more work" since the nearby Tingi-Tingi refugee camp had emptied.

However Ms. Quintaglie said the evacuation had been "a tremendous setback for our operations, just at a time when we had firmly established good supply routes by air and road to places like Tingi-Tingi."

Eastern Zaire has been in turmoil since Tutsi-led rebels rose up last October against President Mobutu Sese Seko. Hundreds of thousands of refugees have been uprooted in four months of fighting in the region, a majority of which have trekked home to Rwanda.

A representative of the Zairean government was due Saturday to resume discussions in South Africa where international media, including U.S. envoy George Moose and U.N. representative Mohammad Sahnoun, have been talking to both sides on ways of ending the conflict.

Mr. Sahnoun, in Paris Saturday for talks with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, said that a ceasefire was essential if a further human tragedy was to be avoided.

"With no cessation of hostilities, we will be unable to reach the displaced people" and head off "a tragedy which could be on the scale of the humanitarian crisis that took place in Rwanda in April 1994," he said in a reference to the Rwandan genocide in which more than 500,000 people died.

S. Korea's Kim keeps hardline against North

SEOUL (Agencies) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam Saturday maintained his hardline stance toward rival North Korea, emphasising the south's need for a "complete and perfect" national security regime.

"No one can predict when an eventual map will develop on the Korean peninsula. If peace on the peninsula is broken once again, it would bring an enormous disaster that would be hard to bear," Mr. Kim said in a live televised speech at a ceremony marking Independence Movement Day.

"In order to preclude such a national calamity, we must build up and maintain a national security posture that is complete and perfect," Mr. Kim said.

South and North Korea remain technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended without a formal peace treaty.

On Saturday South Korea marked the 78th anniversary of a civil uprising in March 1919 to demand an end to Japanese colonial rule which did not come until August 1945.

"Once again I call upon the North Korean authorities to discard confrontation and, instead, follow the path to reconciliation and cooperation. Doing so is the only way to extract itself from its difficulties," Mr. Kim said.

Communist North Korea has been on the brink of famine after severe floods in the past two years devastated croplands in a nation already suffering from chronic food shortages.

Mr. Kim's remarks came as South Korean and Chinese diplomats were working to break a deadlock over the fate of Hwang Jang-Yop, the most senior North Korean official ever to flee North Korea. Mr. Hwang has sought shelter in Seoul's embassy in Beijing.

A spokesman for the embassy Friday said no progress had been achieved in the talks to bring Mr. Hwang, Pyongyang's top theoretician, to Seoul.

Mr. Hwang's defection has further strained ties between the two Koreas, but there have been signs in recent days that the crisis may be easing.

Albright 'certifies' Mexico as cooperating with U.S. in drug war

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A defensive U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright certified Mexico as cooperating in the fight against illegal drug trafficking Friday while decertifying Colombia and eight other countries.

Mrs. Albright defended the decision to endorse Mexico's efforts, saying Washington would keep a close eye on its southern neighbour and had "firm expectations of further progress in the near term."

Among the steps expected were "all-out efforts to capture major drug traffickers, increased extradition of co-killers and leading traffickers to the United States, (efforts to stop) money laundering and attacking corruption."

Mexico's certification, which means it remains eligible for economic aid and loans, had been questioned publicly since the Feb. 18 arrest of the head of Mexico's anti-narcotics bureau, General Juan De Jesus Gutierrez, for allegedly protecting one of the country's most powerful drug lords.

Mexico hoped to boost its case Thursday by announcing the arrest of Oscar Malherbe De Leon, alleged head of Mexico's Gulf cartel, and that police had turned down a two-million-dollar bribe.

Still, 24 of 100 U.S. senators signed a letter urging President Bill Clinton to decertify Mexico, which shares a 3,000-kilometre border with the United States. The two neighbours, with Canada, form the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Afghanistan, Colombia, Iran, Burma, Nigeria and Syria were all decertified, as they had been last year. Lebanon, Pakistan and Belize were also decertified but were granted waivers on sanctions.

Nearly all of the world's coca leaf is grown in Peru and Colombia, with Bolivia in third place, but Colombians dominate the process of converting coca into cocaine and smuggling it into the United States.

"Corruption remains rampant in the highest levels of the Colombian government," said Mrs. Albright.

More opium poppies from which heroin is processed are grown in Colombia than anywhere else in the Americas, with Mexico in second place.

Colombians immediately criticized the decision.

"This is a profoundly unfair decision," Colombian President Ernesto Samper said in Bogota at a ceremony to honour Colombian drug-fighting heroes. "It has turned (U.S.) certifica-

tion into a political mechanism."

"It seems Colombia has been made the scapegoat," Colombia's Ambassador to Washington Juan Carlos Esguerra said.

Part of the U.S. problem with Colombia is that its Congress cleared Mr. Samper of charges he accepted millions of dollars from cocaine cartels to finance his 1994 presidential campaign.

"The corruption was highlighted again this year by our actions to revoke President Samper's U.S. visa as well as that of many government officials and members of their Congress for aiding and abetting drug traffickers," said Robert Gelbard, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for international narcotics and law enforcement.

"Perhaps worst of all, as Colombian police and prosecutors were pressing ahead with investigations and prosecutions of the Cali cartel mafia, President Samper... (was) undercutting them, attempting to negotiate a deal with those same criminals," said Mr. Gelbard.

Belize, the former British Honduras located in central America, has not been decertified before and is a primary trans-shipment point, said Mr. Gelbard.

British political skirmishing turns nasty

LONDON (R) — Scare tactics looked set to shape Britain's pre-election skirmishing after Prime Minister John Major warned voters of "a midsummer nightmare" if they backed the opposition Labour Party.

With an election due within weeks, Mr. Major's biting tone — backed by strong language from some of his party's top officials — showed the gloves are off in the British election campaign before the polling day has even been named.

Senior Conservatives said Mr. Major, well behind in the opinion polls, is making a last-ditch bid to hold onto power by telling voters a Labour government would lead to new taxes, a constitutional crisis and a damaging social policy.

"We shouldn't pretend we haven't been warned. The signs are all there," Mr. Major said in a speech in Scotland Friday night. "Britain could be just weeks away from a midsummer nightmare."

Mr. Major is always at his best under pressure, and the pressure piled on this week when Labour trounced the ruling Conservatives in a key by-election in north-west England.

Labour candidate Ben Chapman overturned a Conservative majority of 8,183 votes Thursday to win the affluent commuter-belt constituency of Wirral South by 7,888 votes.

Were the Wirral result to be repeated in the general election, which is expected on May 1, Labour would win by a landslide. But Mr. Major sought to portray Wirral as a dress rehearsal that went wrong.

"One cross in the wrong box and we could have more spending, new social burdens on business, new union rights, the end of choice in education and the end of new health opportunities. The beginning of the breakup of Britain," he said. "All this is on Labour's menu. It could all happen. So, next time it's serious."

The Conservatives came from behind to win the 1992 election, but face a far tougher fight to claw back Labour's 20-point lead in today's opinion polls and win a fifth straight term.

Reverting to tried and tested tactics, Mr. Major declared an end to the "phony war" of late and said "new Labour" was just like old Labour: The party of higher taxes and higher interest rates.

His top lieutenants painted the same nightmare scenario in what was clearly a coordinated new front in the campaign.

Home Secretary Michael Howard declared that his party's "fight back begins here today... We shall fight over the next few weeks as we've never fought before."

Conservative Party Chairman Brian Mawhinney said "the countdown has begun" against a party that will always "tax and spend their way to economic crisis."

"Who pays? You pay," he told executives Friday night in Yorkshire, northern England.

But the soundbite of the day went to an unnamed Conservative who was quoted in London's Evening Standard newspaper as saying his party's approach to voters was "to scare them shitless" about Labour's plans for the nation.

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Right time to take off

THE INSTRUCTIONS by His Majesty King Hussein yesterday to the prime minister to put on hold all idle government employees until they find proper work in the private sector constitutes the single most important internal decision since the King reactivated Jordan's democratic process in 1989. Various governments in the past three decades were reluctant or did not possess the political will or courage to take this daring and essential step. The first Royal Commission to be entrusted to carry out this awesome task was formed in 1984 headed by then-Prime Minister Ahmad Obaidat. Numerous attempts at this were made but nothing was achieved in terms of reforming the civil service, trimming down its numbers or increasing its efficiency.

Prime ministers, ministers and officials have always defended their failure to address the issue by contending that it was politically explosive. Now the King takes the decision and entrusts his prime minister, Abdul Karim Kabariti, with tackling the issue head on.

But keeping to his humane nature, the King ordered that those employees being put on hold be given their salaries and allowances in full until they find new jobs.

Although the decision will not immediately reduce the burden on the budget, it will most certainly enhance the efficiency of the dedicated employees who will stay in their jobs and eliminate all the destruction and bickering that idle civil servant cause.

The government, of course, will have to devise the mechanism to evaluate the performance of all employees and to decide who to lay off and who to keep and promote. Mr. Kabariti was right yesterday when he said, in response to public sector engineers' demands for more pay, that his government would only give incentives to special jobs that will take Jordan into the next century.

The plight of orphans at Al Hussein Social Welfare Foundation, in Jabal Taj that His Majesty described in his letter to the prime minister is only a tiny example of the failure of the bureaucracy to deal with the most basic needs of society.

Mr. Kabariti has so far been able to tackle head on two of the Kingdom's ailments: subsidy and corruption. Reforming the civil service, however, is a more formidable task. There have been over the years a number of plans that were devised by Jordanian and foreign experts and consultants for reforming civil service that the government can draw on. What is needed now is to seize the opportunity of the King's directive and start the reform process.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

JORDAN, ALONG with Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and many others, is not convinced that the present struggle in Sudan is one between that country and Eritrea, Uganda and Ethiopia because they have studied the facts on the ground, said Jamal Shaer, a writer for Al Ra'i Saturday. It is clear to these countries that the present struggle is one between the military regime in Khartoum and the rest of the Sudanese people, with all the political parties opposing the ruling party, according to the writer. When Sudan was a democracy, the country did not witness sectarian violence or ethnic disturbances, but these ills surfaced all of a sudden the minute one group tried to impose its will and dictatorial powers on the rest, he said. The present military regime in Sudan, which came to power by force, is trying to win the support of the Arab countries by claiming that African nations surrounding Sudan are trying to partition the country, but the truth is just the opposite, since we see these neighbours all agreed on the need to safeguard Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, continued the writer. He said that by resorting to religious and other sensitive matters to win over the Arab World and the Sudanese public, the regime in Khartoum can achieve nothing; but the solution lies with true democracy which can be achieved through a national dialogue and reconciliation.

FOLLOWING HIS meeting with the French leaders in Paris, Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam declared to the world that Israel does not seek peace with its Arab neighbours but aggression and continued occupation of their lands, said a writer for Al Ra'i, Saturday. Mr. Khaddam expressed Syria's views and those of most of the Arab World which continues to watch the Jewish state taking illegal measures, bent on perpetuating its occupation of Palestinian lands, said the columnist who writes under the pen name Meem. How can Syria enter into negotiations with Israel when its government maintains that the Golan Heights, occupied since the 1967 war, is Israeli land, and how can it accept Israel's imposition of its own terms on the Arab in any solution to the problem? asked the writer. In light of Israel's disregard of the Oslo agreements with the Palestinians and its current practices and construction of Jewish settlements around Jerusalem and other parts of occupied Palestine, both Syria and Lebanon feel there is no hope of reaching any peaceful settlement through negotiations with the present Israeli leaders. The writer said Israel's arrogance and its present actions can never bring about peace to this region and cannot guarantee security for the Jewish state.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Going global means survival

THOSE WHO theorise that the world has only one superpower are definitely right. However, it is not true that this only superpower is the United States of America. Evidence to the limitation of the U.S. power is overwhelming: the regime of Fidel Castro is surviving in the backyard of America; the regimes of Iraq and Iran are thriving despite the American doctrine of dual containment; the government of Israel is defiant of the American plan for peace in the Middle East, let alone the lagging of the weak American economy relative to the strong Japanese and the German economies and the American staggering trade deficit with most countries of the world.

It is true the U.S. controlled the United Nations for a period of time following the end of cold war and the war against Iraq. The international Security Council became a rubber stamp for decisions made in Washington's White House or State Department. However, America could not get the backing of any decision from the Security Council during the past few years due to the Russian, Chinese and French veto. This was clearly demonstrated by unilateral actions in striking Iraqi targets without the usual cover of the international consensus, which only increased its isolation and depicted the (former) superpower as a world-

wide bully which cannot care less about international law. My purpose here is not to downgrade America or to strip it of its superpower status. The purpose is to claim that the only remaining and rising superpower by the end of the twentieth century is the global market. No one can negotiate with the global market or ask for favours or compromises. Either states join this newly emerging and non-stoppable superpower or perish.

This global market expressed itself as an institution of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which is currently operating as a traffic police which organises the entry and exit of the players and holds them accountable for any violation.

Isolation from the global market means decline for the state, stagnation for its economy, poverty and hunger for its people. See for instance North Korea, which has everything except the link to the global market. It is not a coincidence that countries like Sudan, Somalia and other black African countries are suffering economically and are marginalised because they are living at the margins of the global market.

As we all know, American forces bombed every possible target in Iraq. They dropped over 90 million tonnes of

explosives on this small, developing country, but they could not score a definite victory. America reverted to the tougher punishment of the Iraqi regime and people by isolating Iraq away from the global market. That is the only weapon which can weaken the army and starve the people.

Instead of invading Cuba outright, America blockaded it commercially to isolate it from the global market and made it live in a box, pending its fate. It is only a matter of time before it will be made to kneel.

Cutting off a country from the global market could be the equivalent of the "final solution" to destroy an enemy. One is fully aware of the risks of fierce competition in the heartless global market. One understands the difficulties and challenges of opening up one's economy to the global market. However, one has no alternative but to take this course of action. Those who make reservations against the European partnership or against joining WTO do have strong reasons which are fully understood and acknowledged; yet it should be realised that the alternative to joining the global market is self-punishment; it is suicidal.

Corsica: No more bombs?

By Gwynne Dyer

"IF THE Corsicans want their independence, let them have it!" Last October, former French Prime Minister Raymond Barre broke ranks and spoke the words that no French official ever did. And you could see why: 20 years of nationalist terrorism on the Mediterranean island, an average of 600 bombs a year and latterly more and more of them on the French mainland... Enough is enough.

But Barre's outburst did not trigger a rapid slide into Corsican independence. On the contrary, there has been a decisive shift towards a get-tough policy in Paris — and on present evidence, it is a resounding success.

In the past month most of the known leaders of the Corsican separatist movement have been arrested and there has been neither the blood-bath nor the general strike that many predicted on the island. "I believe we have at last left ambiguity behind," said current French Prime Minister Alain Juppe last month, closing the door on the long history of official appeasement of the terrorists. In Paris, they are starting to hope that they have actually won.

The French seized Corsica from Genoa in 1768. Their punishment was Corsican-born dictator Napoleon Bonaparte, who fled France dry during his 15-year-long effort to conquer Europe. But the Corsicans have never been very happy with the relationship either.

There are only a quarter-million of them, but to this day most of them do not use French in their daily lives, clinging instead to "Corsican", a variant of the Genoese dialect of Italian. There was never a full-scale Corsican version of the Sicilian mafia, but the local obsessions with family and honour, the traditions of secrecy and blood feud bring Sicily irresistibly to mind.

Corsica is also a very poor place. Its economy is the usual Mediterranean island combination of goats, wine and tourists, with the emphasis on the tourists. But the nationalists have been killing people (over 40 dead in 1995) at a clip that has scared most of the tourists away.

So why doesn't France just give Corsica its independence? One reason is that most Corsicans do not really want it. Even the bombers mostly do not want that — not when French subsidies amount to \$1.4 billion a year, or almost \$6,000 per capita.

In the last election to Corsica's local assembly, in 1992, the separatists got only one-fifth of the votes. Opinion polls suggest that now, after the upsurge in violence and the falling tourist income of the past few years, they would get only around one-tenth.

Twenty years ago, when the insurgency started, many more Corsicans wanted independence. There was no elected local assembly then, and everything was run from Paris. Besides, it was 1975, and "liberation movements" were in fashion everywhere, from Quebec to New Caledonia. But that sort of fashion gets old very fast.

Bombs went off, militants were tortured by the French police, people on both sides got killed — and the dilettantes and romantics in the separatist movement were shoved aside by the hard men who knew how to run a war. Who knew, in particular, how to finance a small war: by imposing a "revolutionary tax" on every business operating on the island.

It is standard late 20th-century guerrilla tactics to shake down the local business community: pay up or we will fire-bomb your premises — or maybe we will just kill you. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) does it in the Catholic parts of Northern Ireland, the ETA does it in the Basque country in Spain, the Tamil Tigers do it in northern Sri Lanka.

But in Corsica, with its primitive family-based politics and its deeply entrenched bandit tradition, this was just asking for trouble. For many of the leading gunmen, the independence struggle gradually changed into a glorified and extremely lucrative protection racket. Which led, naturally enough, to turf wars.

Political analysts ponderously explain that the nationalist movement split into three in the early 80s over the French initiative that gave Corsica a locally elected parliament and a degree of control over its own affairs. But the split was at least as much about control of the revenues from the "revolutionary tax".

Most of the bombs that go off in Corsica are reminders for slow payers (\$60 million in property damage in 1995), but the deliberate killings are mostly part of the internal wars between rival clans of gangster nationalists.

Gangsters in jail can easily become nationalist martyrs, however — consider Colombia — so Paris avoided a crack-down and gave the Corsican terrorists plenty of rope. French governments talked secretly to the nationalists, even bargained with them about acceptable levels of violence.

As Justice Minister Jacques Toubaud put it recently, in the 80s, Paris "negotiated with suitcases filled with money." Only one year ago, Toubaud's own government was still secretly talking to A Cuncolta Nazionalista, the political front for the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC). But that is all over now.

The new headline technically dates from

December, when businessman Jacques Dewez bravely refused to pay the "revolutionary tax" on the resort he owns in Corsica and went to the police instead. (The FLNC promptly bombed it). But it was really a strategic decision: Paris now reckons it is safe to hit the ter-

rorists hard because the Corsican population no longer has even a sneaking sympathy for them.

In the past month, every leader but one of A Cuncolta Nazionalista has been arrested, together with many of the lower-level gunmen, and there has not been a shadow of

popular protest in Corsica. More like a collective sigh of relief, in fact. It is over.

There are two lessons here for all the other governments that face similar challenges. First, not every group with a strong local identity is bound to become a separate nation-

ality. Most of them do not need to, nor do most of their people necessarily want to.

Second, you need a 20-year strategy, immense tactical cunning and more patience than Job. Then, finally, the silent majority may throw its weight behind you.

LETTERS

The moment of truth

To the Editor:

IN THE corrida, the Spanish bullfight, the matador times the bull with his cape work and then must decide the one moment when he must hug in close and stab the bull with his rapier. The thrust is meant to kill. If the matador falters, for lack of courage, he is gored. If he moves in with skill, courage and conviction, the bull dies. This is the matador's "moment of truth".

Israel's approval of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement of 2,500 Jewish houses in Arab East Jerusalem is the "moment of truth" for Palestine. How the Palestinians react to this will determine how the Arab states will react to this. And, quickly, if this is to be the lethal Israeli going that kills the state of Palestine — or it is the beginning of a realistic fight by the Palestinians for their own state, even if it is small.

By next year, at the latest, 1999, it will be much too late. The Jabal Abu Ghneim will be followed by a ring road around East Jerusalem, cutting it off from the West Bank. As it is being built, dozens of new settlements for thousands of new Jewish colonists will be built or expanded. These will be joined by a network of military roads, all off limits to Palestinians for "security reasons." What little land the Israelis will leave will be squeezed into ghettos, patrolled by a tame Palestinian National Authority (PNA) militia, supervised by Israeli troops, secret police and heavily armed Jewish colonists. With virtually no work, or the sort of work offered by Israelis, the Palestinians will soon have no option but to leave. And in two years' time, the Israelis will say once again of the Palestinian areas: "A land without people, for a people without land."

All the talk, all the negotiations, all the hand shaking have led to nothing. Certainly the PNA has some control — over perhaps three per cent of the Palestinian territory. But it is losing its land faster to Israeli seizures during negotiations than it has gained with all the talk.

The Israeli strategy is simple. Keep talking, keep smiling, shake those hands, participate in those photo ops, and — seize (actually steal) more and more Palestinian land, houses, businesses and dispossess them and drive them into ever smaller ghettos. If they protest, violently, shoot them — this is a favourite blood sport of the more fanatical Jewish supporters of "Greater Israel." Arabs do not count, certainly not as human beings.

This is the moment of truth for Yasser Arafat. He either acquiesces to this major drive to accelerate the ethnic cleansing of Palestinian lands, clearing them for Israeli colonists like the Serbs did in Bosnia, or he steps forward like a true statesman for the Palestinian, and Arab cause and states unequivocally that the Palestinian aim is national independence for a Palestinian state, that non-violent resistance will be used extensively and relentlessly to beat back Israeli depredations, and that he expects the full and unequivocal support of all Arab countries in his fight for national independence; that unequivocal support from Arab and Muslim nations would mean the full suspension of all ties by these states with Israel, until a Palestinian state is in place. At the same time, he must turn to his real friends in Europe and against his real enemies, Israel and the United States. If he is hesitant about the Americans, he must remember that the U.S. is only interested in oil, Israeli political dominance, military bases and the sale of its second echelon arms. Palestinians count for nothing in American eyes the equation is simple: Palestinian/Arab equals Muslim, equals terrorist, equals enemy of America. This view is pervasive.

If Arafat acquiesces to this major Israeli depredation, the dream of a Palestinian state dies with the acquiescence. Sure, there will be more talk and negotiations, more travel, hand shakes and photo ops — but Palestine will die within a couple of years. He will lose Palestine anyway, in bits and pieces. Then he will be remembered in history as the "grave digger of Palestine."

If he takes courage into his hands and steps boldly forward with the Palestinian national dream of an independent Palestine, he steps forward as a true leader and statesman of his people, a leader who will see the birth of the state of Palestine. Then history will applaud him as the "father of the Palestinian nation."

There is no longer a middle way. Israel has seen to that at Jabal Abu Ghneim.

All this takes resolution and courage. Most Jew-

nations have been created without "blood, tears and sweat," as Sir Winston Churchill aptly described it. If he wants proof, ask the Americans about 1776 — or the Vietnamese, who endured over 30 years of slaughter by three colonial powers before they, too, cast off the yoke of their oppressors.

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For half a dinar more

To the Editor:

SINCE MY return to Jordan five months ago, taxi trips have become an integral part of my daily routine and a focal point of frustrations as I endeavour to carry out my work.

It took me only several days to learn the shortcomings of revealing my foreign roots to chatty taxi drivers.

However, returning to an Amman almost unrecognisable from the one I knew as a young child, my unfamiliarity with the city becomes evident as I attempt to give directions to the driver on where I am going. It is such situations from which incidents concerning taxi drivers' treatment of me as a foreigner have derived, and consequently rendered me incensed.

I was heading to Abdoun for a meeting with a work colleague late one drizzly afternoon last week. After taking a few wrong turnings I arrived at my destination, with the meter bearing a total fee of 850 fils. I handed the driver 1 dinar.

"I want another half dinar," said the taxi driver.

"Why? The meter reads 850 fils," I said.

"For God's sake, give me another half dinar," said the driver.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because it is raining," he said.

"Really? My work establishment does not pay me more money for going out and working in the rain," I said.

"Give me another half a dinar," exclaimed the taxi driver adamantly.

"Why?" I pleaded.

"I need to live," explained the taxi driver.

"And what am I to do?" I asked.

"At this point the taxi driver, stunned by my conviction and confused by my use of his native language, sheepishly shrugged his shoulders as I stepped out of his vehicle.

This small incident epitomises the audacity which I have experienced from taxi drivers on many journeys in Amman and is mild in comparison to other stories which have been related to me by friends and colleagues about taxi services in the capital, particularly as experienced by foreigners.

To my knowledge, the most common incidents involve people, new to the city, being taken on a tour of Amman before being dropped at their destination and consequently being charged three times the necessary fee, or simply intimidated into handing over sums of money greatly exceeding the taxi meter's reading.

Although I am by no means suggesting that every taxi driver in Amman is guilty of such malpractice, I strongly believe that in view of the fact that Jordan's economy is so frequently described as "service oriented", focusing on the transport and tourism sectors, something must be done to deter the ignorant few from jeopardising the development and success of a promising area of the Jordanian economy.

Sacha Baggili,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Little ape-woman Lucy walks tall at last

A team of British researchers have rocked the scientific boat by suggesting that an ape-like ancestor of modern humans walked upright, much like us, rather than crouching like a chimpanzee.

By Tony Seskus

THE REPUTATION of Lucy, a 3.5 million-year-old ancestor of humans, has been given a boost — thanks to the computer age.

In a discovery that will raise scientific eyebrows by challenging a long-held belief, six researchers from Britain's University of Liverpool have concluded that Lucy walked fully erect, much like humans, rather than with a crouched, lumbering gait.

Their hypothesis, reached with the help of computer technology, is likely to prove controversial.

"Oh, I think this could spark a little debate," laughs Russell Savage, a member of the university's Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Biology.

It is appropriate that Lucy's stature should have been raised in Liverpool. She was named after Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds, a song by the Beatles — the famous

pop group from the northern English port city — that was a favourite tune of the team who unearthed her remains in Ethiopia in 1974.

The discovery in the Afar region of almost half the skeleton of a four-foot-tall female, who died at the age of 20, led to the naming of a species, *Australopithecus afarensis*.

For years, scientists have believed that this species — with an ape-like face, low forehead, bony ridge over the eyes and flat nose — walked upright but stooping, with bent knees and a bent back.

Palaeontologists came to this conclusion after comparing Lucy's fossilised joints to similar joints found in living animals, but the Liverpool researchers were sceptical.

"I've never been impressed by what palaeontologists do to re-enact the movement of fossils," says Liverpool anthropologist Robin Crompton. "We wanted to look at the problem from

a different perspective."

In order to determine how Lucy moved, the research team adapted a computer programme usually employed by engineers to predict the behaviour of robots.

Using a three-dimensional image of Lucy's skeleton, the scientists simulated her walking in three ways. First, like a fully-erect human, then like a human with bent knees, and finally like a chimpanzee.

At the end of the experiment, the palaeontologists concluded that Lucy must have walked upright.

"When people walk, their knees and joints produce energy and propel them along. If people walk with bent knees, their joints absorb energy," says Crompton.

In the case of Lucy, if she had walked the way most scientists believe, her body temperature would rise by 1.4 degrees Centigrade in 30 minutes. In her climate, this would have proved fatal.

"We walk upright

because it is beneficial for us to do so," says Liverpool team member Michael Gunther. "It wouldn't make sense for us to walk with bent knees. It would waste too much energy. It's the same (with Lucy)."

According to Mr. Gunther, all animals move in a way that best suits their body type. Chimpanzees walk with a crouched gait because of the shape of their legs and torso.

"Despite the constraints of their method of movement, chimps are far better off walking the way they do than upright," he explains. "They don't decide to walk a certain way. It's determined for them."

However, the notion that Lucy walked with a stoop has been around for nearly 20 years and will not be surrendered easily. The new finding will certainly generate debate.

Chris Stringer, of the British Natural History Museum's palaeontology department, says: "Most of us knew it walked upright — that's nothing new. But if they can prove it walked like humans, that would be significant. The next few months could be very interesting."

This is not the first time that scientists from the University of Liverpool have caused controversy. In 1992, they proposed that the map of human evolution was shaped more like a bush than the more traditional image of

a ladder.

For decades, schools had taught that humans gradually developed into their present state. Evolution was a ladder, with chimpanzee-like hominids on the bottom rung and Homo sapiens at the top.

Liverpool's scientists concluded it was more likely that humans were merely the most recent of 16 to 20 hominid species that have existed since the human "line" split off from the chimpanzee about eight million years ago.

According to the university's report, "new analytical techniques present a picture of diversity and difference in human evolution — not one relentless advance."

One of the Liverpool researchers, Bernard Wood, says: "Most people would accept (our proposal) now, but they didn't then." Even now, he adds, there are papers still being published by those supporting the ladder theory.

The Liverpool team will be presenting their work on Lucy to scientific conferences in Europe and North America. If it is gains approval, it will be published and made available to scientists worldwide.

"Some people love what we're doing; others hate it," Mr. Crompton says. "But — bottom line — I think we've done some good work"

Gemini News Service

U.N. warns of a global water crisis as supplies dwindle

Nicholas Schoon

LARGE AREAS of the globe will start running critically short of water in the next 30 years unless there is a revolution in the way people use this most basic resource, two U.N. reports warn.

Already just over a quarter of the Earth's population faces a struggle to obtain enough water to drink, grow food and run industry, say the documents. "By 2025, as much as two thirds of the world population would be under stress conditions."

Total water consumption worldwide has been growing at 2.5 per cent a year, roughly twice as fast as population growth. It has risen sixfold this century. In 30 years' time, 27 nations, all but three of them in North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, are forecast to be in the U.N.'s "high water stress" category; these include India and Pakistan.

They will face "serious scarcity," with "an urgent need for intensive management of supply and demand." Water shortages will act as a brake on their economic growth.

One solution, argue both reports, is for water supply to be devolved down from big government — often responsible for disastrous damming and irrigation schemes — to local communities and private industry. The other is to concentrate on restraining demand

and using the resource less wastefully.

The two reports, written as a follow up to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, say that water shortages are as urgent as any other global environmental issue.

With some 300 major river basins crossing national boundaries "future conflicts (over their water) are a potent risk." Among the most likely flash-points are thought to be the River Jordan, whose waters are shared between Israel and Arab neighbours, the Nile, which flows through Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, and the headwaters of the Euphrates and Tigris shared between Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

A growing number of countries, including India, China, Mexico, the U.S. and some southern ex-USSR republics, are now taking water from underground aquifers at a much faster rate than they can ever be replenished by rain. As a result, water tables have sunk. In some parts of the world, such as Libya, farming and industry have come to depend on underground "fossil" water, which comes from rain which used to fall tens of thousands of years ago. Once "mined" it can never be replaced.

The reports point out that desalination plants, which take the salt out of sea water, are expensive to build and run and are only an option for wealthy nations like Saudi Arabia.

The populations judged most at risk are those in low income countries (per capita annual gross national product of less than \$2,895) subject to high water stress. There are 1.5 billion people in that category. Their communities will struggle to find the money needed to deal with the worsening shortages.

Egypt is the classic example of a country which is in real danger of a water disaster, say the experts. It is poor, has a rapidly growing population and is almost entirely reliant on the Nile for its water.

Egypt is already a heavy importer of basic foodstuffs, while water-hungry cotton is the most important cash crop. The state buys up all the cotton, but it supplies irrigation water to farmers at a heavily subsidised price. Such subsidies, say U.N. insiders, guarantee the water is used wastefully. But they are found not just in Egypt but in many countries which use extensive irrigation, including the U.S.

Farming consumes most of the water used by humanity, with increases in irrigation largely responsible for the huge increases in crop production needed to feed a fast growing population. As a result, many great rivers no longer reach the sea, and wildlife-rich swamplands have dried out.

The Independent

Sweden's mystery lake monster seeks star status

By Belinda Goldsmith
Reuter

OSTERSUND, Sweden — Swedes are trying to drag their equivalent of the Loch Ness monster into the international limelight.

While the mystery creature in Scotland's Loch Ness has won Hollywood roles and lucrative merchandising deals, the other 250 plus lake monsters reported globally lurk in relative obscurity — including Sweden's Great Lake monster.

The Storsjo monster is said to have lived in its central Swedish lake for at least 360 years and 150 sightings by 450 people have been recorded since 1635.

Yet stories of the creature have remained largely confined to its home

county of Jamtland, about 600 km northwest of Stockholm.

"If this had been America, I would be wearing a T-shirt saying: 'I have seen the monster,'" said Bibbi Hogstrom, head of the tourist bureau at Ostersond on the banks of the Great Lake, who saw the monster when she was 13 years old.

"We have really not exploited the lake monster and that is typical of this area and of Sweden. We don't think it is something really special so we keep quiet about it."

But as unemployment in Jamtland creeps up and tourists shun central Sweden for more exotic locations, local authorities are becoming more aware of the potential value of their own trump card — the lake monster.

Sten Rentzhog, chairman of the Society for Investigating the Great Lake Monster that was set up in 1987, said a conference would be held later this year to design an action plan for promoting the creature.

"This conference will give the monster more publicity," said Mr. Rentzhog, who is also director of Jamtland County Museum.

Sightings of the lake monster date back to 1635, according to Ulla Oscarsson, who has written one of only three books available about the creature. The other two were published in 1899 and in the 1950s.

The first written mention of the monster was in a parish register kept by Parson Mogens Pedersen at nearby Herdal. He said

a magic rune stone created a big serpent.

By the late 19th century the frequency of reported sightings of the monster in Sweden's fifth-largest lake rose.

In 1894 a group from Ostersond set up a company, called The Company to Capture the Great Lake Monster, to track down the animal, using traps baited with pigs and live calves.

Sweden's then king, Oscar II, known for his interest in science, became involved and contributed funds to the company.

Regular sightings reported in recent years, sightings continue regularly.

Last July a group of pensioners on a pleasure cruise on the lake made a 30-second videotape of

the monster as it appeared above the water in what was said to be a three-minute sighting.

"On the video you can see some strange waves moving in a strange way but it is not really very clear," Ms. Oscarsson said.

Ms. Oscarsson said witnesses' reports about the monster fall into two distinct categories: a large eel about three metres long and one metre wide that is grey-brown or a large serpent up to 14 metres long with humps and a small dog-like head.

"People report seeing some movement in waves on the lake and then other waves or humps appearing," Ms. Oscarsson said.

Those who see it from a long distance tend to say it has humps that

could overturn a board but those who see it close-up say the monster is short but thick."

Ms. Hogstrom, now aged in her late 30s, said she was with two other girls when they saw the monster about 200 metres out.

"We saw something come up to the surface of the lake and swim fast, like a thick eel, grey and slimy, definitely not a fish. It turned quickly and then disappeared," Ms. Hogstrom said.

"It was a very calm happening. But when we told people what we had seen they just laughed so we kept quiet about it."

The rise in the number of sightings during the tourist season in Ostersond has caused some sceptics to mull over the power of public relations

on people's eyesight.

Ms. Hogstrom, however, was adamant there was no connection to a public relations push or to the fact the picturesque, lakeside town of 60,000 has one of the highest ratios of bars per capita in Sweden.

Local authorities have taken the monster seriously enough to declare him — or her — a protected species.

In 1986 the county administration of Jamtland declared anyone trying to capture, injure or kill the monster could be prosecuted under the nature conservancy law.

It was also made illegal to remove or damage the great lake monster's eggs, spawn or nest, whichever is applicable.

Researcher Olle Nattsson, who is helping

organise this year's conference, said there were numerous theories to explain why such lake monsters exist.

Like Loch Ness, one theory is that during the ice age 15,000 years ago, the monster became trapped in the lake.

A common pattern true for most of the reported lake monsters around the world is that all the animals are found in lakes and river systems that are either connected or were once connected to the sea.

"But we really do not know much even about this lake or the monster," Mr. Nattsson told Reuters. "Unlike at Loch Ness we have not done any thorough searches and we need to investigate the lake then set down a definite search plan."

King dedicates Al Hashemiyeh Palace

(Continued from page 1)

eyes that the place was crowded and old, lacking qualified persons to run it and help the children. I also witnessed the low standard of health care, malnutrition, lack of cleanliness, shortage of clothes and lack of basic requirements that should exist in such a foundation.

"All these scenes and images will not be removed from my conscience as long as I live. These innocent souls require mental, psychological, physical and moral development which we all should provide for them."

"Knowing that services will be provided to the foundation by the Royal Medical Services, the Royal Court, and the Royal Palace and all institutions expressing readiness to offer help, I do here direct you to transform Al Hashemiyeh Palace into a home for the innocent children who should be able to move there once it has been refitted as soon as possible."

"The maintenance of the children's new home will be the responsibility of the engineering unit employed by the Royal Court."

Queen Noor, Princess Zein and I personally will follow up on the affairs of the new occupants of the palace, assisted by a committee comprising the prime minister, the Royal Court chief, Sheikh Izzeddin Khateeb Tamimi, the competent minister, the chief of the Royal Medical Services and a number

of officials and specialists in nutrition and mental and physical education to provide the best for the orphaned and innocent boys and girls.

"Having said this I call on all Jordanian citizens to offer whatever they can and to improve conditions for such centres so that the children could enjoy life, grow up and be raised in the manner they deserve. I am pleased here to inform you and my Jordanian family that my family and I will move from Al Nadwa Palace into a home which is undergoing refurbishing on the outskirts of Amman (which we called Bab Al Salam (the gate of peace)) so that it will be our home with the blessing of God."

"As to Al Nadwa Palace and its environs, it will be transformed into a suitable palace to host the Kingdom's guests. I do hope these arrangements will bring relief to our minds and souls and bring us closer to God. We implore God Almighty to take good care of Jordanian citizens and protect them and protect Jordan whose people bow their heads only to God alone."

The King and Queen on Thursday visited the foundation which cares for 185 orphaned children aged between one and seven years. The King, in remarks on the occasion, stressed the need for everything to be done to ensure a healthy environment for the children and urged the concerned authorities to provide them with the required services.

Kabariti to begin work on reshuffle

(Continued from page 1)

and because of their importance a month extension of the present Parliament seemed possible.

The draft laws concern the cancellation of the ministries of higher education and information and the introducing a number of economic packages.

Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Srouf was quoted as saying in an interview with Al Dustour daily that the draft laws on the House agenda will be discussed by

either the present Parliament or the next.

He said that any extension of the mandate of the present Parliament had to come upon a request by the deputies or the government but so far no request has been put forth by either party for an extension which requires a royal decree before it takes effect.

Interior Minister Awad Khleifat told Al Ra'i daily that he opposes the extension of the present mandate of the 12th Parliament, as

demanded by some deputies, including the 20 deputies of the National Action Front who expressed their desire for the extension saying that it is needed to discuss and approve a new and modern election law for Jordan.

Dr. Khleifat said that according to Article 73 of the Constitution the King can postpone the general elections under circumstances that make it difficult for elections to take place on schedule.

Premier holds talks with Palestinian minister

(Continued from page 1)

Jerusalem would be discussed by His Majesty King Hussein with U.S. officials during his visit this month to the United States.

Senators who addressed the session condemned the Israeli measure stressing that demographic and other changes in the status of the Arab city will be null and void since they contravene U.N. resolutions and create a dangerous situation in the region.

They also said that statements of condemnation were meaningless demanding that Jordan launch a worldwide diplomatic offensive aimed at the protection of the Holy City.

Senator Kamel Abu Jaber suggested that the Senate and the Lower House hold a joint

session to discuss the question of Israeli settlements and urged the government to send a parliamentary delegation to visit the Vatican and meet the Pope to highlight the seriousness of the situation in the Palestinian lands.

The Senate members decided to issue a statement in this concern. Fawzi Toumeim, chairman of the Arab and International Affairs Committee in the Lower House, said in a statement Saturday that Israel's decision to build the settlements would undermine the peace process and create tension.

He said Israel was resorting to building settlements in order to create a de facto situation in the Palestinian lands and prevent the Palestinians from creating an independent

state in Palestinian soil. The decision to build the settlement, he added, has exposed Israel's real intentions to swallow Arab lands in Palestine in defiance of the world community and the U.N. resolutions. "Israel's irresponsible actions will ruin the peace process because it reflects its disregard to the Arabs' rights in their homeland."

He echoed a call for an Arab summit meeting and another meeting of Arab and Islamic parliaments which, he said, could launch a worldwide campaign to force Israel to desist from pursuing its illegal measure in the Arab lands.

He appealed to the U.S. and the European Union to prevent Israel from carrying out its plans.

Baghdad: No food shipments before April

(Continued from page 1)

lion limit the Security Council had set for the six months.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in Paris on Thursday that the first shipments would arrive on Saturday.

Mr. Akashi said that had been the target date. But he said some countries on the Security Council did not want distribution to begin until the main complement of U.N. monitors, who are to supervise the distribution were on the ground, which would occur about March 15.

"There was a shortage of money. Until we get a certain amount of money we cannot recruit observers. And certain countries insisted that until we have observers they cannot approve the contracts. We went through a lot of chicken and egg arguments," he told reporters.

"Thai rice, Australian wheat, French wheat, Jordanian tea, everything is on the way," he said. "The ships are under way."

Mr. Akashi also said previous barriers in granting U.N. monitors travel documents and communications equipment had been resolved.

The plan calls for a review every three months at which time Mr. Annan can recommend an increase in the oil sold should there not be enough humanitarian supplies to cover basic emergencies.

But most Security Council members have said for months that the resolution authorising the deal would not be changed until the six months had expired. And with food supplies having been delayed, diplomats said it would be nearly impossible to judge whether the current scheme was adequate.

In Baghdad on Friday Oil Minister Amer Rasheed said that the issue of an increase would be raised with Mr. Annan, presumably after he returns from Europe next week and before he files a report on March 10.

But Mr. Akashi said: "I think if we have \$2 billion every six months, that is quite sufficient for us to purchase humanitarian goods, providing we get this machinery on track and we are getting there."

He said that Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Al Sahaf, whom he saw on Friday,

did not raise the issue with him. Instead he said Mr. Sahaf spoke about the delay in the approval of contracts and how the money should be allocated for those contracts that had been turned down.

Gen. Rasheed noted that Iraq was receiving only \$660 million out of every \$1 billion of oil sold "which is not enough to meet the very minimum basic needs of its people." About 30 per cent of the revenues goes to victims of Iraq's 1990 invasion and U.N. costs.

The U.N. Sanctions Committee has so far approved a total of 11 contracts worth some \$150 million.

Iraq hoped the new level of exports would take effect on March 9, three months after the oil-for-food deal was launched, Gen. Rasheed said.

Mr. Akashi said that \$2 billion "is quite sufficient for us

to purchase a very significant amount of food, provided that we get this machinery on track."

"We are getting there," he added.

Jordanian officials outline reforms, investment climate

Counsellors prepare for Medpartenariat conference in July

By Ghaila Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Twenty two Medpartenariat national counsellors from European and Mediterranean countries met here Saturday in an effort to promote in their countries a Medpartenariat conference, to be held in Amman on July 13-14.

The national counsellors, who represent different trade organisations and institutions, will also attract entrepreneurs to take part in this event which is expected to bring together representatives from about 150 Jordanian and 300 European companies.

The conference, to be organised by the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO) in cooperation with the delegation of the European Commission in Jordan, aims at enhancing economic cooperation between countries of the Mediterranean region and the European Union (EU).

It is also geared towards setting up joint Jordanian-European ventures and creating a suitable environment for growth of small and medium-size enterprises.

The July meeting will also discuss economic and political developments, privatisation, labour market, social affairs and the general investment climate.

It will also highlight investment and export

opportunities in Jordan as well as incentives brought about by the new set of economic legislations in Jordan.

Jordan's business climate was also highlighted in Saturday's meeting where the European representatives were briefed on the country's economic progress as well as the general investment climate.

Ministry of Planning Secretary General Nabil Ammari highlighted the progress achieved in the Euro-Jordan partnership agreement which European officials said will support the Kingdom to upgrade a wide segment of the economy.

Dr. Ammari said, "despite tough negotiations," Jordan was able to gain concessions from the EU to increase the volume of agricultural exports to European countries.

Regarding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), Dr. Ammari added, Jordan has been granted a total grace period of seven years to review, rewrite and enforce internationally acceptable IPR laws. He said that Jordan has five years from the time the agreement comes into effect, and two years prior to the agreement.

However, Dr. Ammari pointed out, the pharmaceutical and chemical sectors were only granted a three-year grace period after the agreement comes into effect.

Jordan seeks to protect its multi-million dinar phar-

maceutical industry, which accounted for \$120 million in exports in 1995.

Dr. Ammari stressed that Mediterranean countries can benefit from cumulative rules of origin before completing free trade agreements among themselves as previously requested by the EU.

Under the cumulative rules of origin, Jordan can add any inputs imported from Europe as one originating in Jordan.

JEDCO Director General Mohammad Halaqia said Jordan has concluded bilateral and free trade agreements with Egypt, Bahrain, Libya and the West Bank. He added that negotiations are underway with Tunisia.

"Jordan is well placed in the region. Most of our exports go to the Arab World and we are also the gateway to Iraq," Dr. Halaqia added.

"We regard the partnership with the European Union as a strategic option. About 32 per cent of Jordan's imports come from the EU and that makes the EU as Jordan's major trade partner," Dr. Halaqia said in his inaugural speech.

He added that the Euro-Jordan partnership "will provide an efficient mechanism for enhancing business and economic relations on both the public and private levels."

The EU has allocated a budget of 4.6 billion European Currency Units (ECUs), or \$5.8 million, in grants to the Mediterranean

countries for the year 1996-1999.

Israel, Morocco and Tunisia have concluded partnership agreements with the EU, which is also negotiating similar accords with Lebanon, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Exploratory talks are underway with Syria.

Jordan is also negotiating accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Tammam Al Ghoul, Director of WTO office and Head of the research department at JEDCO told the meeting.

She said that Jordan submitted a memo outlining its trade regime to the WTO in October. The next round of negotiations, Ms. Ghoul added, will be held in June when Jordan will present answers to the questions of some WTO members on the Kingdom's economy.

"Jordan has achieved its reform programme. It has also done quite a lot towards liberalising its trade," Ms. Ghoul said.

She added that Jordan has introduced a new set of economic laws which will jump-start the economy and lead to high economic productivity and growth.

Reem Badran, Assistant Director General at the Investment Promotion Corporation, briefed the counsellors on Jordan's investment climate and said Jordan has enacted new economic laws to encourage investment in the Kingdom.

Ms. Badran said Jordan was previously requesting a

minimum requirement for investment of JD100,000. This requirement is no longer a condition for investment in the Kingdom, she added.

Muayyad Samman from JEDCO ended the meeting with a presentation on the benefits of doing business in Jordan.

He said that apart of its strategic location, Jordan enjoys a political, monetary and fiscal stability.

Other benefits of conducting business in Jordan, Mr. Samman told partici-

pants, is the "availability of skilled, well-educated labour force at relatively low costs." He added that Jordan has a "well-developed infrastructure, a favourable investment climate, international exporting potentials as well as well-established free-trade zones and industrial estates."

The July meeting, which is expected to attract 500 visitors from 27 countries, will encourage technology transfer from Europe to Jordan, Dr. Halaqia said.

It will also set the ground for an increase in trade exchange between the two regions, he added.

Dr. Halaqia hoped the meeting "will enhance Euro-Mediterranean cooperation forward and with Jordan in particular."

Similar meetings were held in Turkey, Morocco and Israel last year. The conference in July will be the fourth major event of the Medpartenariat, which will be followed by a meeting in Tunisia.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NZD	FRF
US Dollar	1.5903	0.6141	1.4785	1.2035	1.3678	1.6920	1.9005	5.7075	
DEM	0.6285	1.0000	0.6562	0.8719	0.5089	0.6003	0.7143	2.3164	
GBP	1.5285	2.7495	1.0000	2.4045	1.9672	2.2275	2.7582	3.0850	8.2947
CHF	0.7284	1.1428	0.7142	1.0000	0.5136	0.6248	1.1443	1.2885	3.2550
JPY	0.0082	1.4039	0.5097	1.2280	1.0000	1.1380	14.05	157.85	4.7404
CAD	0.7371	1.2395	0.4551	0.7023	0.5232	1.0000	1.2257	1.3893	4.1352
ITL	0.0006	0.0084	0.0025	0.0073	0.0079	0.0079	11.23	3.3712	
NZD	0.7362	1.2395	0.4551	0.7023	0.5232	0.7150	1.0000		
FR Franc	0.1752	0.2961	0.1075	0.2585	21.06	0.2396	33.29	33.2900	

Energy		USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brent	19.50	20.25				
WTI	20.25	20.25				
Bony	19.50	20.25				
UL Gas	185.00	195.00				

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4509	0.16375	0.3944	32.1069
AE Dirham	0.2722	0.46041	0.1672	0.4073	32.7276
KW Dinar	3.3003	5.58036	2.02675	4.88043	387.258
QAR Dinar	0.3776	0.64632	0.23293	0.55151	45.3572
CY Pound	1.968	3.3282	1.2943	2.9112	236.969

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	353.35	353.85
Platinum (oz's)	392	393
CU (3 Months)	N/A	N/A
ZN (3 Months)	N/A	N/A
Lead (3 Months)	N/A	N/A
Al (3 Months)	N/A	N/A

Currency Deposit Rates (BID)						
Period	1 -	3 -	6 -	9 -	12 -	1 -
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.28	5.40	5.53	5.65	5.81	
GBP	5.75	5.87	6.00	6.13	6.29	
JPY	0.55	0.50	0.50	0.57	0.58	
DEM	2.35	2.40	2.45	2.50	2.52	
FRF	3.20	3.23	3.28	3.30	3.34	
CHF	0.99	1.03	1.05	1.08	1.10	
ITL	7.31	7.30	7.15	7.05	6.97	

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	5877.74	-47.33	-0.85	5923.92	5861.12
London	FT-SE 100	4308.3	-30.9	-0.71	4340.4	4299.9
Paris	NIKKEI 225	11857	-24.5	-0.21	11900.5	11840.3
Frankfurt	CAC 40	2807.55	-21.85	-0.83	2833.23	2805.33
Amsterdam	AEX	3265.5	-17.08	-0.52	3284.23	3261.71

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	180.17	Spot
Sugar (c/lbs)	311.8	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	22.72	Spot
Barley (c/lbs)	2.39	Spot

JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Bid	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	0.7833	0.785
DE Mark	0.4181	0.4202
CHF Franc	0.4182	0.4203
FR Franc	0.124	0.1246
JP Yen	0.0073	0.0074
NL Guilder	0.3721	0.374

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

ASEAN finance ministers sign free trade accords

PHUKET, Thailand (AFP) — South East Asian finance ministers signed two agreements Saturday as part of efforts to liberalise trade and financial systems in the region.

Ministers signed a customs agreement seen as a step forward in the realisation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and a pact to boost ties between the member country finance ministries.

In a communique, the ministers said the customs agreement would "help expedite the early realisation of AFTA as it contains provisions that would facili-

tate greater regional trade and investment flow."

The ministerial understanding on ASEAN cooperation in finance, it added, would strengthen ties between ministries in banking and finance, as well as insurance, customs and taxation.

Ministers highlighted "the importance of concrete and pragmatic cooperation in the area of finance as a part of a building block to realise ASEAN's goal of greater economic integration," the communique said.

ASEAN — the Association of South East Asian Nations — groups Brunei,

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The meeting, the first gathering to take place of ASEAN finance chiefs without other economic ministers, was touted as a step towards greater financial liberalisation within the group.

"We have looked into this financial liberalisation programme and we have agreed that we will make efforts to deepen and broaden our financial liberalisation activities," Thai Finance Minister Anuray Virawan said.

Thai officials have said

that one of the aims of the meeting was to push for such liberalisation in order to put the ASEAN house in order ahead of the implementation of the terms of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

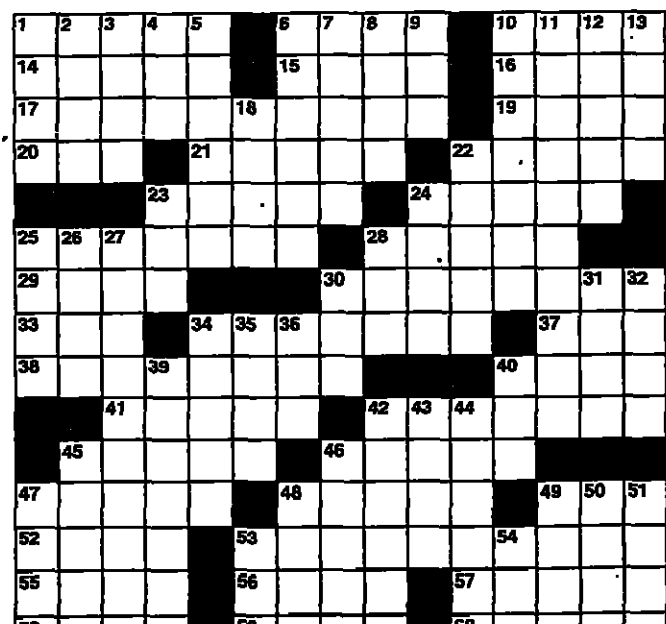
The communique said ministers "reaffirmed their commitment to further liberalise their financial services sector as part of the deregulation process in their respective economies."

Many ASEAN countries have kept their financial sectors firmly closed, arguing that they were not mature enough to withstand foreign competition.

However, despite the talk of financial liberalisation, ministers added in the communique that trading partners should have realistic expectations in the opening of financial markets.

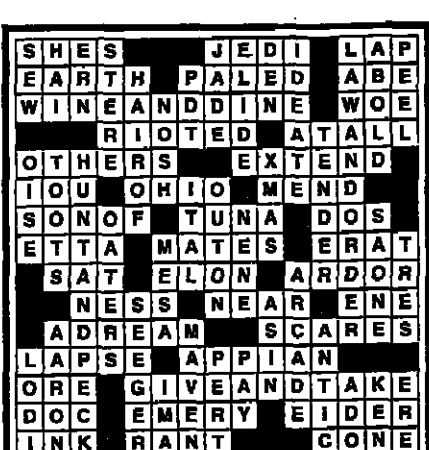
THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- 1 Peruvian beast
 - 6 Feel sore
 - 10 Bus, degrees
 - 14 Fabulist
 - 15 Rain like mad
 - 16 Sea direction
 - 17 Quagmire film
 - 19 Bul of course!
 - 20 Computer science letters
 - 21 Taking a gander
 - 22 Beer mug
 - 23 Batons
 - 24 School: Fr.
 - 25 Entertains
 - 28 Heart chambers
 - 29 Cupid
 - 30 Condenses
 - 33 Every last one
 - 34 Underwater flick
 - 37 Approves
 - 38 Disaster relief agency
 - 40 Mover and shaker
 - 41 Omit a syllable
 - 42 Nuts
 - 45 Easy tasks
 - 46 Over
 - 47 Time gap
 - 48 Carriages
 - 49 An Arthur
 - 52 Andy's pal
 - 53 Chuck Norris film (with "The")
 - 55 Nary a one
 - 56 Fleuret
 - 57 Potato state
 - 58 Fathers
 - 59 Vereen and Franklin
 - 60 Morise mate



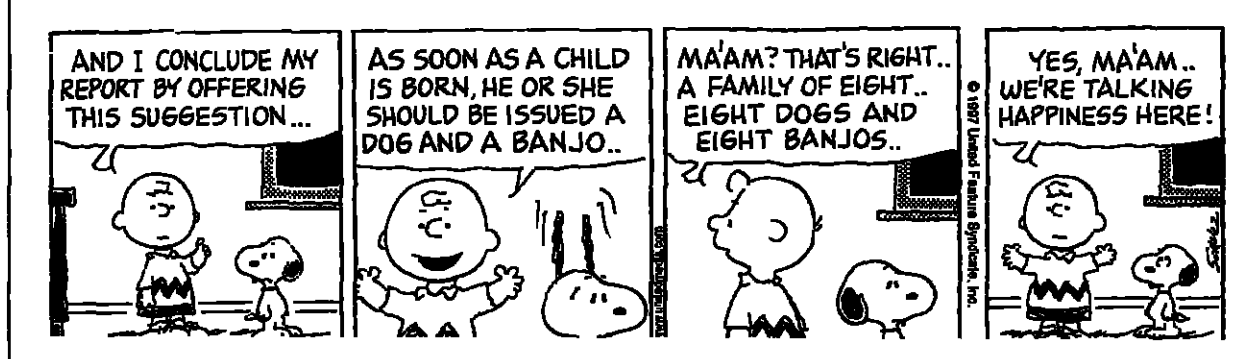
by Robert Frank

- DOWN
- 1 Emit intense light
 - 2 Indecent
 - 3 PDQ
 - 4 Matriarch
 - 5 Charm
 - 6 Plant insects
 - 7 Dimes, e.g.
 - 8 Suspended
 - 9 Work unit
 - 10 Bone head ear
 - 11 Deserted isle movie (with "The")
 - 12 High nest
 - 13 Perceived
 - 18 Actress Daly
 - 22 Kind of money
 - 23 Existed
 - 24 Raison d'—
 - 25 Raise
 - 26 Perry's author
 - 27 Fonda/Hepburn film (with "On")
 - 28 Fortas or Lincoln
 - 30 Classifieds
 - 31 Gave out carefully
 - 32 Parts of a former land: abbr.
 - 34 Nonsense
 - 35 Mortarboards
 - 36 Natives of: abbr.
 - 39 Seminars
 - 40 Adams or Ho
 - 42 Marbles
 - 43 Tibetan priest
 - 44 Inept one
 - 45 Pacific island
 - 46 Sen. Specter
 - 47 Territory
 - 48 Toons' LePew
 - 49 Cereal grain
 - 50 Reverberate
 - 51 Long time
 - 53 Coming-out gal
 - 54 Lyric poem



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Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson
Astrologer, Carroll
Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) This is a good day today to get into new career activities which have the ability to make your endeavours more successful. If at all possible, postpone an obligation to a more propitious time. Drive very carefully. **TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) Don't allow a fellow associate disrupt your schedule today or you won't be successful. Try some new activities with your mate later this evening and create more harmony at home for those who are under your roof.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Study a matter today with a fellow associate from a new angle, and you can get much better results. Don't allow a disturbing situation to slow you down from obtaining the success which you have been searching for.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You should not allow a silly distraction keep you from attaining your wishes. An interesting new friend can be very helpful with career activities, if you are so inclined to discuss the situation with him or her.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Don't get yourself into a huff over a difficulty at home today or you could make things worse. Be sure you don't take any risks where your reputation is concerned later tonight, or there will be those who won't trust you. **VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Steer clear of a communication which could cause you difficulties, however, if you keep any promises you have made. Drive carefully on the highway and thereby reduce any difficult situations in the days ahead.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You can please a dynamic new fellow associate, however, avoid getting involved in money schemes of any sort. You should not start any property repairs, until a more appropriate time, so simply be patient until then.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Try to operate more harmoniously with your fellow associates and thereby eliminating any difficulties. This is a good day today to start a plan of action which will improve your health considerably and make you look good. **SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You should not allow a personal concern annoy you to the point of ruining your day. Get into some new creative activity with your mate and you can make him or her feel an important part of your operation.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Steer clear of an acquaintance who is always demanding or there could be some difficulties developing. Today is a good time to invite those guests in who you've been waiting to entertain and would have a good time.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Keep your distance from someone today who wants to run your life or you could find yourself in a difficult situation. Show your superiors that you are efficient and capable in your duties and thereby become quite successful.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You'll have a fine opportunity today for adding to your income, so don't go flying off on any crazy tangent. Attend to any financial difficulties which you encounter in your career activities that may deter your success.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Jordanian banks raise interest rate

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Several Jordanian commercial banks have quietly raised interest rates on loans in Jor-

danian dinars by one per cent following a hike in the yield offered by treasury bonds offered by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ).

The move, which was agreed among at least six

of Jordan's nearly 20 commercial banks, sets the interest rate on dinar loans between 14 and 16 per cent as opposed to the previous 13 to 15 per cent.

Simultaneously, the banks also raised interest they offer on dinar deposits to 9.5 per cent.

Other banks are expected to follow suit, but officials at the country's two largest banks, the Arab Bank and the Housing Bank, said they were not contemplating an immediate increase.

Despite the increase, most banks offer special rates and preferential treatment for select clients, some of whom obtain credit at 12.5 to 13 per cent interest.

The CBJ has left market forces to determine interest rates since the late 80s. However, the Central Bank follows a policy of maintaining a three per cent interest advantage for the dinar against the U.S. dollar in a bid to encourage deposits in the local currency and check large-scale conversions of the dinar.

Throughout 1995 and 1996, the Central Bank issued several tranches of three- and six-month treasury bonds worth an average of 15 million dinars with an average yield of seven per cent. Today, yield on the short-term papers, sold only to commercial banks by the Central Bank, is between nine and 9.5 per cent.

However, the yield has been largely constant in the last few months, and market watchers said they could not pinpoint any specific reason for the hike by commercial banks.

One of the impact of high interest rates had been a drain of capital from the stock market as many investors switched their holdings from stocks to the more attractive dinar deposits in local banks.

The Central Bank defends its move by asserting that its prime responsibility is to defend the local currency and it cannot be expected to adopt moves that would serve speculation in the stock market at the expense of the stability of the dinar.

Instead, the government has been prompting state-run and state-guided investment agencies to intervene in the market with liquidity to maintain price levels and to give an occasional boost to stocks.

Banks in Jordan offer advanced payment service

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanians with bank accounts may no longer have to carry check books or currency notes if their banks are members of a new service introduced in Jordan last month.

The new service, entitled Jordan Network (JONET), established by Jordan Payment Services Company (JPSC), will provide Jordanian bank customers, as well as tourists, with a 24 hours-a-day access to all Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) located throughout the Kingdom once their banks join this network.

"As far as tourists are concerned, JONET has already been licensed by Visa International to provide this service from the different ATMs belonging to certain banks who have already joined the service," said JPSC Executive Director Sa'id Shuqum, in a press conference.

The project, with a capital of half a million Jordanian dinars, is the first in the Arab World. It took six months to execute the project since the signing of the agreement last July between JPSC and Nomad Software, owners of Cortex Software.

Mr. Shuqum also stressed that by joining this service, not only will customers have an easy access to bank notes, especially during holidays and weekends when banks are closed, but the number of bouncing checks will also be reduced since the bank will provide its customers with credit cards, instead

of check books if the amount in their account is not large.

"Each bank will set its own limit, and for the future we will coordinate with the different department stores to also accept these cards through including the Point Of Sale (POS) service in the network," he said.

The number of ATM's currently stand at 120 and by the end of this year 90 ATM's will be providing this service. But if all the Jordanian banks with ATM's join the network, the numbers of ATM's providing this service will reach 190.

As of last month, the customers of two banks, the Housing Bank and the Arab Bank Corporation with 30 ATM for both, have already been utilising

this service since the two banks are linked to JONET.

"A customer of the Housing Bank can withdraw money from the Arab Bank Corporation and visa versa," said Mr. Shuqum.

By the end of this month the Arab Jordan Investment Bank and the Jordan Investment and Finance Bank will also be linked to JONET bringing the total number of ATM's which provide this service up to 40.

The number of Jordanians with credit cards ranges between 70,000 and 100,000 but the number is expected to reach 300,000 in the coming two years.

Jordanian banks, Mr. Shuqum said, will be cutting their expenses since they will be sharing the ATM's, especially that

"not a single Jordanian bank can carry the financial burden of importing all the ATM's needed by their customers."

As for JONET future plans, Mr. Shuqum said that the network intends to expand its services by linking itself with Arab neighbouring countries as well as Gulf states. Once this aim is achieved Jordanians visiting these countries or the other way round will be able to use this service.

He also stressed that by the end of this year, JONET will provide other services such as paying electricity, telephone and water bills.

According to Mr. Shuqum, a total volume of JD 50,000,000 is disbursed by all ATM's in Jordan annually.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Buying spree boosts AFM trading

** ACCORDING TO Wahib Shair, the director general of the Amman Financial Market (AFM), buying orders amounted to JD 3.9 million during the past month. The volume was about four times more than the sale figure. Arab and foreign investors accounted for 26 per cent of the total volume of trade which amounted to JD14.8 million in February 1997 (Jordan Times).

Two telephone exchanges to be put into operation this month

** WALID DWEIK, the board chairman of the Jordan Telecommunications Company, has announced that two telephone exchanges will be put into operation this month. The first, with a capacity of 46,000 lines will serve the zones of Nazzal, Al Jabal Al Akhdar, Al Thera'a and the neighbouring areas. The second exchange will have a capacity of 20,000 lines and will serve the zones of Jabal Al Nasr, Wadi Al Nasr, Alia and the neighbouring areas. According to Mr. Dweik the cost of the two exchanges amounted to JD7 million and JD6 million respectively. He expected that three other exchanges will be put into operation this year. They will be in Sahab, Dahiyat Al Rashid and Abu Alanda with a capacity of 11,000 lines, 18,000 lines and 10,900 lines respectively (Al Dustour).

21 Jordanian companies acquire ISO certificate

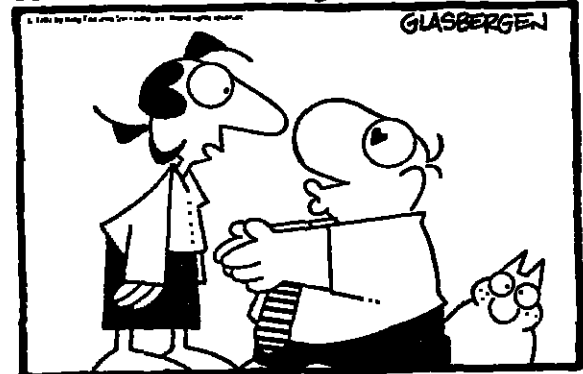
** TWENTY ONE companies and institutions have acquired the ISO quality certificate, Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI) President Khalud Abu Hassan told a group of industrialists noting that most of the companies were industrial firms. Mr. Abu Hassan pointed out that about 60 companies are awaiting the certificate for which they applied to the concerned authorities.

Also addressing the gathering, the director general of the Standardisation and Specifications Department said that it is a high accomplishment to register such a high number of companies that have acquired the ISO certificate. He pointed out that "all projections indicated the possibility of only 25 Jordanian firms that would be able to obtain the ISO certificate until the year 2000." But all indications are proving just the contrary" he emphasised (Al Ra'i).

Consulting engineering centre also obtains ISO certificate

** THE CONSULTING Engineering Centre (Sajdi & Partners) has recently been awarded the ISO 9001 certification by the BVQI. As such, the centre becomes the first consulting engineering firm in Jordan and the Middle East to be awarded this prestigious certificate. The Centre, which provides studies, designs and construction supervision services in the fields of water & wastewater, dams, highways, bridges and airports projects, has been expanding its services since the eighties to cover countries in Asia, Africa and Europe, such as Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Maldives, Egypt, Gambia, Lesotho, Mauritius, Senegal, Zambia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and the West Indies (Jordan Times).

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"It's sweet that you got special contact lenses for Valentine's Day, but they're giving me the creeps."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

BRILLO
LEVOG
THENUR
CHEWEN

He used to have his own business
WHERE HE ENDED UP WHEN HE WENT BROKE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.
(Answers tomorrow)

Print answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: TARDY CHALK WEAPON PONDER
Answer: What the author did in his garden - WORKED ON HIS PLOT

Iran to build two gas storage units for \$700 m

TEHRAN (R) — OPEC-member Iran plans to build two underground facilities worth up to \$700 million to store natural gas near Tehran, a senior Iranian official has said.

Deputy Oil Minister Hamdollah Mohammad Nejad said excavation work on one of the facilities, outside Varamin 50 kilometres southeast of Tehran, would have started, the daily Hamshahri newspaper reported.

The second storage facility, outside Qom 120 kilometres south of the capital, was under study and design, he said.

The facilities, each with a capacity of one million cubic metres (35.3 million cubic feet) would be built for \$300 million to \$350 million each supplied by the oil ministry, Mr. Mohammad Nejad added.

He said authorities would draw on the gas stocks "in times when it is needed," in apparent reference to periods of high consumption when Tehran's domestic gas distribution and power network has suffered from shortages.

Iran holds the world's second largest gas reserves after Russia but most of its natural gas is in the south of the country, far from Tehran and other large population centres in the north

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHARJAH ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 01/03/1997													
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH LOW		COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADS.	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE			
1.266.000	205.000	ARAB BANK	14.5	1.31	10	240	63860	265.00	266.50	1.50			
2.100	1.900	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	30	11349	22653	2.00	1.98	-0.02			
3.650	2.900	BANK OF JORDAN	11.5	0.00	4	2250	7634	3.21	3.21	0.00			
1.210	0.800	MID. EAST INV. BK.	70.3	0.00	14	49750	52888	1.05	1.07	0.02			
2.610	2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	5.4	5.87	5	4250	10074	2.37	2.37	0.00			
5.200	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.6	2.94	11	4060	19081	4.70	4.70	0.00			
2.950	2.440	JOR. KUMAT BANK	20.1	0.00	7	966	2673	2.77	2.77	0.00			
1.090	0.840	JOR. GULF BANK	5.2	8.05	24	192350	165479	0.86	0.87	0.01			
4.120	3.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	18.9	0.00	13	5450	21483	3.93	3.93	0.00			
3.800	3.000	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	17.6	0.00	4	663	2155	3.28	3.25	-0.03			
3.030	1.600	BEIT AL-MAL (BEITNA)	1.0	9.68	1	150	233	1.60	1.55	-0.05			
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 201.58 %CHG: +0.36 123 271578 368210													
1.740	1.390	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	11.2	4.93	1	250	380	1.60	1.52	-0.08			
2.800	1.830	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	10.36	6	1878	3624	2.95	1.93	-0.02			
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 119.74 %CHG: -0.41 7 2128 4004													
1.830	1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.4	7.27	5	1094	1804	1.66	1.65	-0.01			
1.540	1.080	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	21	13450	16576	1.24	1.23	-0.01			
1.050	0.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	22.0	3.76	3	900	888	0.97	0.99	0.02			
0.800	0.410	MACH. REP. REPT. MAIN.	9	0.00	2	2000	920	0.46	0.46	0.00			
3.720	3.130	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	13.4	5.68	5	3000	10230	3.42	3.40	-0.02			
1.220	0.960	JAZZA EDUCATION	9	0.00	1	200	208	1.05	1.04	-0.01			
2.230	1.690	UNIFIED CO.	8.8	5.95	13	7050	13119	1.89	1.85	-0.04			
1.200	0.790	UNION LAND DEV.	8	0.00	1	250	198	0.78	0.79	0.01			
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 108.97 %CHG: -0.30 51 27944 43942													
3.730	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.6	2.92	23	11405	39217	3.47	3.43	-0.04			
0.100	8.720	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	10.3	7.88	8	366	3714	10.15	10.15	0.00			
1.190	1.150	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	61.3	0.00	5	1700	2346	1.37	1.18	-0.19			
3.500	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COM. AGR.	35.4	0.00	6	1050	2767	2.67	2.63	-0.04			
7.950	6.420	JOR. WOODSTOCK MILLS	8.9	3.60	1	100	595	7.00	6.15	-0.85			
4.420	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	20.9	5.25	3	157	595	3.83	3.81	-0.02			
7.250	5.650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.6	3.61	3	2700	18780	6.95	6.12	-0.83			
5.680	3.130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.6	8.70	4	1300	4485	3.48	3.5	0.02			
0.960	0.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	6	4950	2921	0.59	0.59	0.00			
1.520	1.130	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	3	1000	1130	1.13	1.13	0.00			
1.020	0.540	NATIONAL TINS.	9.6	9.23	4	592	384	0.65	0.65	0.00			
1.540	0.930	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	4	1750	1813	1.03	1.03	0.00			
3.730	2.130	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MFG.	14.3	0.00	1	250	588	2.30	2.35	0.05			
1.670	1.080	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	28.6	0.00	8	16950	25991	1.55	1.33	-0.22			
1.540	1.000	KAWTHER INVEST.	40.3	5.36	5	50	56	1.10	1.12	0.02			
2.800	1.440	UNIV. MODN. INDUS.	5.2	0.00	6	2900	4967	1.73	1.73	0.00			
1.820	1.140	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	17.1	0.00	10	5850	7956	1.37	1.36	-0.01			
1.270	0.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	24.7	0.00	15	7250	6600	0.92	0.91	-0.01			
1.360	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	28.2	0.00	5	5450	6620	1.20	1.20	0.00			
1.470	0.930	UNION CR. & VEG.	24.6	0.00	3	3500	3520	1.01	1.00	-0.01			
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.99 %CHG: -0.29 119 69270 135163													
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 156.91 %CHG: -0.06 300 370920 551319													
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 01/03/1997													
0.690	0.440	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	18.5	0.00	3	1000	460	0.47	0.46	-0.01			
0.790	0.500	JOR. TRADE FAC.	13.9	0.00	12	12000	6240	0.52	0.52	0.00			
0.850	0.370	ARAB FIS. INVEST.	9	0.00	8	12700	9713	0.46	0.46	0.00			
0.950	0.400	AL-DAMLIYAH 751	15.1	0.00	2	2100	822	0.65	0.67	0.02			
0.440	0.210	JOR. INDUS. MACH. JENCO	9	0.00	1	250	55	0.22	0.22	0.00			
0.760	0.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	8	0.00	3	1000	600	0.61	0.60	-0.01			
1.690	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	10.02	7192	10027	10027	10027	1.40	1.40	0.00			
0.690	0.450	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	5	3500	1649	0.47	0.48	0.01			
0.850	0.400	NATL. SECT. ENG. HANICO	17	0.00	17	2000	9547	0.57	0.57	0.00			
0.470	0.330	HAZKAR DIES & MOWLS	5	0.00	5	13000	7990	0.62	0.61	-0.01			
0.990	0.720	JORDAN STEEL	8	0.00	5	2000	1460	0.74	0.73	-0.01			
0.750	0.620	MIDRABT PHARM. 751	8	0.00	5	6700	2479	0.62	0.62	0.00			
0.770	0.770	HAKI PHARM. 651	16	0.00	16	4400	3389	0.60	0.60	0.00			
0.680	0.390	INDS. ENG.	8	0.00	10	6050	2662	0.44	0.44	0.00			
0.820	0.590	NATL. POULTRY	8	0.00	6	3100	2189	0.74	0.70	-0.04			
1.020	0.600	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	63.2	0.00	1	60	63	0.62	0.62	0.00			
0.950	0.530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	0.00	17	25050	16784	0.67	0.67	0.00			
GRAND TOTAL 122 129942 72165													
I : New 12 months high L : New 12 months low H : Listed during the past 12 months P/E : Negative P/E E : Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year													

Bulls notch 50th win with furious first half

CHICAGO (R) — The Chicago Bulls became the first NBA team to reach the 50-win plateau on Friday, venting their frustration over Thursday's loss in a big way.

Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen each scored 23 points in a sensational first-half and the Bulls cruised to a 126-108 thumping of the Sacramento Kings.

The Bulls, held to 70 total points in a loss at Cleveland Thursday, responded by punishing Sacramento in building a 72-42 halftime lead.

"I want to extend my thanks to the Cavaliers for putting us in a jam tonight," Kings coach Garry St. Jean said. "I haven't seen a better half played by anybody this season."

"My hat is off to them. They're the best in the business."

Jordan, who was 9-for-12 in the first half, finished with 35 points. Pippen, who sat out the fourth quarter, had 29.

"Scottie set the tone for us tonight," Jordan said.

"When he gets hot like that I can sneak in and out, and when we're both hitting on offense, we're a tough team to beat."

In Orlando, Richie Adubato had the interim removed from his head coach title and his Orlando Magic showed the reward was justified by improving to 6-0 under their new leader.

Penny Hardaway had 20 points and eight assists and Gerald Wilkins scored 16 points as the Magic rolled to a 94-73 rout of the struggling San Antonio Spurs.

Dominique Wilkins scored 19 points to lead the Spurs, who suffered their 43rd loss.

"Gerard Wilkins was great off the bench tonight," said Adubato. "I think he had a little incentive playing against his big brother. They were really going at each other."

In Boston, Grant Hill scored seven of his 29 points in overtime and posted his fourth triple-double of the month as the Detroit Pistons handed the Celtics their 12th straight loss, 106-100.

The victory was the eighth

in nine games for the Pistons, who forced overtime when Lindsey Hunter tipped in an alley-oop inbounds pass from Hill at the buzzer.

Hill had his sixth triple double of the season, finishing with 12 rebounds and 12 assists to go with his 29 points.

At Indiana, Rik Smits scored 21 points and Mark Jackson dished out a club-record 19 assists as the Pacers beat the Milwaukee Bucks 104-85.

Reggie Miller added 20 points and Dale Davis had 16 and 11 rebounds for Indiana. Glenn Robinson scored 20 points and Ray Allen had 16 for Milwaukee.

In Miami, Gary Payton had 27 points and 11 assists and Hersey Hawkins made four free throws in the final six seconds as the Seattle SuperSonics edged the Heat 96-95 for their 40th win of the season.

Shawn Kemp contributed 26 points and 11 rebounds and Hawkins finished with 22 points for Seattle, which won for the eighth time in nine games.

Tim Hardaway had 29 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds and Voshon Lenard scored 20 points for Miami.

In Denver, John Starks scored seven of his 23 points in overtime and Patrick Ewing finished with 22 and 12 rebounds as the New York Knicks beat the Nuggets 112-108 to move within a half game of first-place Miami in the Atlanta Division.

Charles Oakley had 10 points, 18 rebounds and eight assists and Larry Johnson scored 21 points for New York.

Antonio McDyess scored 32 points and Ellis added 29 for Denver, which rallied from a 91-85 deficit with three minutes left in regulation to take the lead. A pair of Ewing free throws with 15 seconds left sent the game to overtime.

In Atlanta, Dikembe Mutombo had 27 points and 14 rebounds and Mookie Blaylock also scored 27 points to lead the Atlanta Hawks to an 86-75 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Mutombo had 14 points



Atlanta Hawks Henry James (42) and Dikembe Mutombo (55) battle Los Angeles Lakers Corie Blount for a rebound in the second period Friday at the Omni Coliseum. Atlanta beat LA Lakers 106-100 (Reuters photo)

and six rebounds in the third quarter, which opened with a 10-1 Hawks burst. He also had four blocked shots.

Steve Smith added 17 points for the Hawks, who improved to 24-3 at home.

At New Jersey, Latrell Sprewell shook off a sprained ankle to score 37 points in leading the Golden State Warriors to a 117-108 victory over the Nets.

Joe Smith added 20 points and Todd Fuller chipped in 18 for the Warriors.

Kendall Gill scored 30 for the Nets, who were denied a chance to win three in a row for the first time this season.

In Portland, Kenny Anderson had 30 points and

12 assists and Isaiah Rider added 26 points to lead the Trail Blazers to a 115-105 victory over the Utah Jazz.

Clifford Robinson and Rasheed Wallace chipped 20 points apiece for Portland, which ended a three-game slide.

Karl Malone scored 30 points to lead Utah, which lost for just the fourth time in 21 games.

In Vancouver, Jerry Stackhouse scored 25 points to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 104-100 victory over the Grizzlies in a matchup of the NBA's worst teams.

Clarence Weatherspoon added 20 points and Derrick

Coleman chipped in 19 for Philadelphia. Bryant Reeves led Vancouver with 26 points.

In Los Angeles, Darrick Martin scored 23 points, including three free throws in the final 26 seconds, to lift the Clippers to a 94-92 win over the Toronto Raptors.

Malik Sealy added 22 points and Loy Vaught had 18 and 11 rebounds for the Clippers, who have won four in a row to move into seventh place in the Western Conference playoff race.

Damon Stoudamire scored 22 points, but only five in the second half to pace the Raptors.

TENNIS ROUNDUP:

Ivanisevic blasts Prinosil to reach Italian Indoors final

WITH HIS awesome serve working to near perfection, Goran Ivanisevic found tennis inspiration Saturday to carve out a 6-0, 7-6 (8/6) victory over outclassed German David Prinosil and reach the final of the \$815,000 Italian Indoors in Milan.

Ivanisevic raised his singles record for 1997 to 21 wins in the rapid-fire match, which lasted an hour at the forum in front of a crowd fewer than 1,000.

The world no. 5 Croatian ran his career record against the world No. 59 German to 4-1 as he moved to within a match of defending his second title of the year after winning in Zagreb last month.

Top seed Ivanisevic will face the winner of a night match between the unseeded Sergi Bruguera of Spain and German teenager Nicolas Kiefer, billed in the Italian press as the "new Becker" due to his membership on a Mercedes training team with the Gremar as titular head.

Ivanisevic had it easy in the opening set but had to work in the second, finally advancing from a service winner on second set point after Prinosil saved one winning chance for the Croatian.

The victory reinforced Ivanisevic's decision to sit out last week's event in Antwerp to let a case of tendonitis in his left shoulder heal properly.

The Croatian's one-way win moved him into his 41st career final.

Sampras eases into Philadelphia semis

In Philadelphia, world number one Pete Sampras, the last remaining seed at the

Advanta Championships, outclassed qualifier Doug Flach 6-4 6-2 on Friday to roll into the semifinals.

Sampras, who won the Australian Open and San Jose tournament earlier this year, extended his

unbeaten record in 1997 to 15-0 with Friday's victory.

"He's just a level above everybody else," said the 129th-ranked Flach, who had no answer for Sampras's arsenal of shots.

"Actually, he's two levels above me," joked Flach. "My strategy? Not to get hit by a serve."

Standing between Sampras and his third consecutive final this year is 88th-ranked Dutchman Sjeng Schalken, another qualifier, who had little trouble disposing of 61st-ranked American Jonathan Stark 6-2 6-4 in their quarter-final.

Saturday's other semifinal placed 78th-ranked Grant Stafford of South Africa against 60th-ranked Australian Patrick Rafter.

Stafford, who upset second-seeded defending champion Jim Courier Thursday, did away with 66th-ranked Sandoz Stolle of Australia 6-4 6-2.

Rafter recovered from a bad second set to oust 55th-ranked Byron Black of Zimbabwe 6-3 1-6 6-1.

Sampras, who struggled with his serve before beating Swede Jonas Bjorkman Thursday night, enjoyed a far more efficient performance against Flach.

"This was the best match I've played so far this week. I really didn't let him get into the match," said Sampras, who belted nine aces and won 81 per cent of his first-serve points.

Sampras, who lost his serve four times in the previous round, never faced a break point against Flach.

The 20-year-old Schalken, the youngest player to win a title last year, took just five games from Sampras in their only previous meeting last year at the Lipton Championships.

"I'm going to try and win more than five games," Schalken said in his semifinal aspirations. "I think it will be different this time. He has to play good, otherwise I beat him."

"I feel good, strong,"

Schalken said. "It's been an amazing week."

Pierce gives France 1-0 lead over Japan

In Tokyo, French ace Mary Pierce chilled a noisy home crowd by beating Naoko Sawamatsu to take a 1-0 lead in the opener of the Fed Cup tennis World Group first round tie against Japan on Saturday.

Pierce, the 1995 Australian Open champion and runner-up this year, used an effective combination of top spin and hard shots to bring Sawamatsu down, scoring a 6-0, 7-6 (7/4) victory on the hard court of the Ariake Coliseum.

The first three games were long, full of break points and deuces, but Pierce, who saved six break points in the second game, eventually emerged the winner on an advantage point to surge ahead 3-0 before taking the set.

Sawamatsu, ranked 47th against Pierce's 12th, held her serve for the first time and then converted a 30-40 chance to score a break for 2-0 lead in the second set.

But it was her last opportunity as Pierce stood firm through the remainder of the 109-minute match, making it an even 2-2. Sawamatsu took a mini-break twice first in the tiebreaker to lead 2-1 and 4-2, only to see Pierce fire her powerful strokes to force the Japanese errors to go up 5-4. Pierce completed the match with two free points on her serve.

As a total, Pierce hit six aces against two double faults and converted four of 13 break points, while Sawamatsu had seven break chances and no aces.

It was her second consecutive win over Sawamatsu without a loss in major tournaments. With the win, Pierce stretched her win-loss record in her Fed Cup career to 9-5.

U.S. figure skating champion Lipinski flawless in Champions Series final

HAMILTON, Ontario (R)

Fourteen-year-old mighty mite Tara Lipinski, the recently-crowned U.S. figure skating champion, turned in another flawless performance Friday to take the lead after the women's short programme at the Champion Series final.

Lipinski nailed every one of her required elements Friday to again upstage world champion Michelle Kwan, who lost her U.S. title to the diminutive Lipinski two weeks ago.

"I'm first," said the 1.42-metre Lipinski, flashing a million dollar smile as she watched her name appear in the number one spot on the electronic scoreboard.

"I like the marks and the boos," said her coach Richard Callaghan of the crowd reaction to scores which ranged from 5.4 to 5.7. "That means you're a crowd favourite."

For the 16-year-old Kwan, who won this title last year, it was another bad day at the office.

Kwan fell on the front end of her planned triple

lutz-double toe jump combination and was forced to settle for third place heading into Saturday's free skate.

"I was waiting for the perfect take-off and I missed it, I guess. I still have (the final) to go for it all," said Kwan.

In second place was Russian national champion Maria Butyrskaya, who collected first-place rankings from the Russian and Azerbaijani judges, while the other five preferred Lipinski's performance.

The six skaters who accumulated the most points from the six-meet Champions Series qualified for this event.

"Going against the best in the world, I trained hard to have confidence and do my job the best I can," Lipinski said.

Lipinski's training partner, men's world champion Todd Eldredge, didn't fare as well as his young friend.

The American stumbled on the landing of his triple lutz and fell to one knee. The judges made the nec-

essary point deductions, leaving Eldredge third after the short programme.

That was fine with the crowd, which was solidly behind local favourite and twice world champion Elvis Stojko, who put on his usual display of technical brilliance to rank first on four of the seven judges' cards.

The other three judges gave the nod to the Olympic champion Alexei Urmanov of Russia who stood second.

Eldredge, however, was the only one of the six contenders to land a triple-triple combination — an axel-toe loop. Stojko and Urmanov only managed to tack doubles onto their triple axels.

"I was disappointed I didn't do the triple-triple. I've been doing it all week and did two on the warm-up," said Stojko. "I felt really good about the programme, though," he said.

In the pairs event, four-time German national champions Mandy Wotzel and Ingo Steuer, who

earned world silver last season, took the early lead over Russians Oksana Kazakova and Artur Dmitriev.

Third in the pairs was Russia's reigning world champions Marina Eltsova and Andrei Bushkov, who lost points with his stumble on the landing of their side-by-side triple jumps.

An interesting battle was developing in the ice dance event with Canadians Shae-Lynn Bourne and Victor Kraatz in a see-saw struggle for first with Russians Anjelika Krylova and Oleg Ovsianikov.

Bourne and Kraatz led after the five couples had skated their compulsory dance, the Golden Waltz.

But the Russian duo scored more points in the original dance segment of the three-part competition and took over the lead going into Saturday's free dance final.

Marina Anissina and Gwendal Peizerat of France stood third.

Skating union chief says judging guilty

HAMILTON, Ontario (R)

International Skating Union (ISU) President Ottavio Cincinqua says changes must be made in the system of judging the popular sport but that a solution is elusive.

Cincinqua, here for the champions series finals, spoke Friday about the vagaries of the current system which saw Russia's Alexei Urmanov catapult from sixth to first at the '97 European Championships after the final skater, who did not win a medal himself.

"We have to produce a mathematical system that this will not happen. When you finish your performance and you are ranked in front of a skater you have to retain that position," said Cincinqua.

"In all sport disciplines where there is (subjective) judging, it's very difficult. If some expert is available to give us a perfect system, we will send him a bottle of champagne and flowers."

Cincinqua defended the judges themselves. "Each of the nine judges has a right to an opinion. It gives a wider sense of democracy but also produces some complications. The current system is good but everything can be improved," he said.

Current world leader Carlos Sainz of Spain driving a Ford Escort and Kenneth Eriksson of Sweden in a Subaru Impreza retired from the Safari Rally in the first section on Saturday after damaging their cars, their teams said.

Sainz Swerved to avoid hitting an animal 40 kilometres into the rally and

punctured a wheel while speeding between Isinya and Olkejuado in the dusty Masailand, southwest of Nairobi.

The wheel was changed but dust trapped between the rim and the hub forced the nuts to loosen damaging the studs.

Eriksson, winner of last month's Swedish rally, was forced out after hitting a rock which wrecked the

whole right rear wheel assembly.

The damage was repaired but the mechanics exceeded the maximum repair time allowed by 30 seconds, forcing the crew into an early retirement.

"We were driving relatively slowly over a crest and there were one or two large rocks in the middle of the road, but unfortunately it was not possible

to avoid them," Eriksson said.

Meanwhile, Armin Schwarz of Germany driving a Ford Escort was leading after early leader Tommi Makinen of Finland, the reigning S

World Champion, in a Mitsubishi Lancer had a puncture and was delayed trying to change the wheel.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL:634144 PHILADELPHIA "1" Dolph Lundgren, Gina Bellman & Conrad Dunn.... in SILENT TRIGGER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:634144 PHILADELPHIA "2" Brad Pitt, Julia Ormond, Anthony Hopkins & Aidan Quinn...in LEGENDS OF THE FALL Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:699238 PLAZA Adel Imam, Shireen & Saeed Saleh Bakhit Wa Adilah (2) Al Jardal Walkankah Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:677420 CONCORD CONCORD "1" CURT RUSSEL & STEVEN SEGAL...IN EXECUTIVE DECISION Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD "2" Michael Jordan ...in SPACEJAM Shows: 3:30, 6:00	Nabil & Hisham's Theatre TEL: 625155 THE THEATRE WILL BE CLOSED UNTIL MARCH 1 FOR MAINTENANCE & REDECORATION WE WILL BE BACK WITH Aman.. Ya Ho

Manchester United edge four points ahead; Arsenal into third

LONDON (AP) — Manchester United moved four points ahead in England's Premier League with a 3-1 victory Saturday over Coventry and Arsenal won 2-0 at Everton to leap over Newcastle into third place.

Manchester United, the defending league champions, went ahead 1-0 in the fourth minute on an own goal by Coventry's Gary Breen and then made it 2-0 when Andy Cole scored a minute later. Czech international Karel Poborsky added another in the 47th and Darren Huckerby got one back for Coventry in the 86th.

Manchester United has 57 points to 53 for Liverpool, which plays at

home to Aston Villa Sunday with a chance to move back within one point.

Arsenal, after back-to-back home losses last week to Manchester United and Wimbledon, got goals from Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp and Ian Wright for the 2-0 win at Everton. The victory gives the Gunners 51 points — three more than slumping Newcastle.

The Magpies — picked by some to win the league — lost 1-0 at home to Southampton on a goal early in the second half by England international Matthew le Tissier.

Newcastle played its first game without Alan Shearer since the England

international last week underwent his third groin surgery in 10 months.

Newcastle stays on 48 points in fourth.

In three other upsets on a day of many, relegation-struggling Nottingham Forest won 1-0 at Tottenham and Wimbledon — with only three losses in its previous 34 games — went down 3-1 at home to surging Leicester.

Leicester played the match without American international goalkeeper Kasey Keller who in playing a World Cup qualifier against Jamaica.

Derby also defeated favoured Chelsea 3-2 on a goal in the final minute by Ashley Ward.

In other Premier League

matches: Blackburn 1, Sunderland 0; Leeds 1, West Ham 0; Sheffield Wednesday 3, Middlesbrough 1.

In the English First Division, Wolverhampton drew 0-0 with Ipswich to hang on to second place by one point over third-place Barnsley. Barnsley defeated Southend 2-1. League-leading Bolton plays Sunday at Wolverhampton.

In Scotland's Premier Division, leading Rangers played a 2-2 draw at Aberdeen and No. 2 Celtic defeated Hearts 2-0 on goals by Jorge Cadete in the 28th and Paolo di Canio in the 61st. Rangers lead Celtic by five points.

Bayern hit five to stay top of pile

BONN (AFP) — Bayern Munich retained their three-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga on Saturday as they whipped MSV Duisburg 5-2 as closest rivals Borussia Dortmund saw off 1860 Munich 4-1 to keep in the hunt.

"Super" Mario Basler gave Bayern the perfect start by scoring on three minutes and Jurgen Klinsmann blasted a second, his ninth of the season, after 26 minutes to make the result a formality even before the break.

A brace from Christian Ziege and a Dietmar Hirsch own goal followed before Alf Nijhuis scored two consolation goals late on.

Strike tandem Karlheinz Riedle and Stephane Chapuisat were both on target, as were Paulo Sousa and Jurgen Kohler as champions Dortmund brushed aside 1860 Munich, for whom Daniel Borimirov netted.

Third-placed Bayer Leverkusen lost two points on Dortmund as they were held to a goalless draw in Dusseldorf, while Stuttgart drew 2-2 at Werder Bremen.

Cologne moved into the top five after a late Holger Gassmaier goal saw off rock-bottom Freiburg.

Unfancied Arminia Bielefeld continued their march up the table Friday with a 3-2 win over VFL Bochum.

Renaud shocked at world mark

ST CATHERINES, Canada (AFP) — Canadian Chris Renaud said he was shocked when he realised he had broken the 50m short course backstroke world record when he clocked 24.25 seconds at the Canadian Interuniversity Swimming Championships here on Friday night.

Renaud, who broke the previous record of 25.13 set in 1993 by American Jeff Rouse, became the first Canadian to break a world record since Mark Tewksbury broke the 100m backstroke record in 1992.

"I was shocked when I looked up at the scoreboard. I couldn't believe I had gone that fast... For the final, I was mentally ready and very focused. I was really into it," Renaud said.

"Dave Johnson, the national team coach had told me the record was possible. I was trying to convince myself the same but really I didn't think I could drop that much time," Renaud added.

Juventus take 8-point lead

ROME (AFP) — Juventus beat Vicenza 2-0 in their Serie A match on Saturday to motor eight points clear of second-placed Sampdoria at the top of the table.

The result, with goals from Angelo di Livio and a Michele Padovano penalty, puts pressure on Sampdoria who play Bologna on Sunday.

And Juventus won despite many absences including French internationals Zinedine Zidane and Didier Deschamps, Italian national keeper Angelo Peruzzi and playmaker Alessandro del Piero.

Marcello Lippi's squad proved their strength in depth as the rejigged side gave an impressive show of collective strength. Di Livio

put Juventus ahead in the 23rd minute and Padovano fired home a spot kick in the 64th minute.

In the other match, Lazio bounced back from their loss to Parma last week with a 1-0 win over Fiorentina thanks to a last-minute goal by Marco Negro, hitting home from a goalmouth scramble.

Newcastle FC valued at £200m

LONDON (R) — England's Newcastle United FC will make their stock market debut in April in a flotation valuing the club at almost £200 million (\$325 million), broker Natwest Markets said on Friday.

Natwest said the offer price would be in the range of £120 to £135 per ordinary share, valuing Premier League Newcastle United at between £172 and £193 million.

The offer is expected to raise £47.4 million net and trading will begin on April 2. Ten per cent of the shares are to be made available to the public rather than institutions.

Newcastle are the latest in a growing number of British soccer clubs to join the stock market. The value of listed clubs has soared over the past year as investors seek to cash in on the game's current

boom.

A lucrative contract with pay television giant British Sky Broadcasting Plc BskyL has helped to transform the game, enabling clubs to recruit top foreign stars and to upgrade once crumbling stadiums.

English champions Manchester United MnuL have provided the model on and off the pitch, building a business valued at over £400 million in the six years since flotation.

"The directors believe that Newcastle United has reached a stage in its development where it will benefit from the opportunities that derive from being a listed company," said Sir Terence Harrison, who has been appointed non-executive chairman.

Newcastle, which has invested £50 million since 1992 in recruiting players such as England captain Alan Shearer, Frenchman

David Ginola and Colombian Faustino Asprilla, said around £21 million would be used to repay borrowings.

A further £12 million would be used to pay for future instalments of transfer fees for current players and up to £10 million to fund proposed training and youth team development facilities.

Cameron Hall, the family holding of millionaire Newcastle backer Sir John Hall, will retain a 57 per cent stake in the club after flotation.

Sir John is to remain as chairman of Newcastle United FC — the soccer club rather than the overall business — and has said he will focus his energies on developing a centre of excellence for young players.



A file photo of Al Faisali

Jordan's Al Faisali beat Morocco's Raja in elite Arab clubs tournament

By Mufeed Hassouneh in Casablanca

JORDAN'S Al Faisali made the biggest upset of the Arab Champions Cup staged in Casablanca, Morocco, when they beat hosts and top seeds Al Raja 2-1.

Al Faisali, who lost their opening match 4-0 to Egypt's Al Ahli on Thursday, stayed alive in the elite four-team championship, after Al Ahli lost an earlier match to Morocco's Khreibkeh.

Al Faisali's captain, Jamal Abu Abed was the moving force behind his team's win in the match, whose first half ended in a goalless draw.

Abu Abed showed superior skills as he deceived Al Raja defence and sent a long-range ball to Jirys Tardos who headed home in the 23rd minute of the second half.

Minutes later, he sent a superior pass to Hassouneh Al Sheikh who was tackled in the 18-yard box, merit a penalty kick which was ignored by Syrian referee Mohammad Al Kikhya.

Twelve minutes from the end, Al Raja managed to score the equaliser making it 1-1.

But Al Faisali never relented and managed to retrieve the lead through a counter-offensive led by Abu Abed who passed to Hassouneh Al Sheikh who manoeuvred skilfully before sending the ball in the nets making it 2-1.

Standings after Saturday's matches

Team	GF	GA	Pts
Khreibkeh	3	2	4
Ahli	3	6	3
Faisali	2	5	3
Raja	1	2	1

Al Faisali's goalie Freidon Saeed, substituting for Waleed Abu Hmeid who sustained a head injury in the first match, showed good form in the match and managed to boost the morale of his colleagues with good saves throughout the match.

Observers here in Casablanca commended Al Faisali's performance and paid tribute to its head coach Mazhar Al Saeed, saying Al Faisali now has a great chance to win the championship.

Al Faisali now occupies the third place with 3 points. Khreibkeh now tops the four-team standings with 4 points, followed by Egypt's Al Ahli with three points.

After the match, Youth Minister Mohammad Daoudiyeh conveyed to Al Faisali's team members the congratulations and greetings of His Majesty King Hussein and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.

Mr. Daoudiyeh praised the team's efforts and said the prime minister has issued instructions to the concerned departments to give all due support to its members.

The Arab Champions Cup, which kicked off Thursday, aims at naming the best Arab team as the event groups the top two teams of the Cup Winners Cup and League Champions.

Significant cash prizes await the participating teams with the winner receiving \$50,000, the runner-up \$25,000, the third place finisher \$15,000 and the fourth team \$10,000.

Rulemakers reject TV cameras as help to referees

BELFAST, Northern Ireland (AP) — Soccer's rulemakers Saturday rejected the idea of TV cameras helping referees to make decisions.

The international board, which is allied to FIFA, also ruled that goalkeepers can't keep the ball for more than five or six seconds and can't handle it after receiving a throw in.

FIFA President Joao Havelange and General Secretary Sepp Blatter were in Belfast for the board's annual, rule-making meeting in which it simplified the 60-year-old language of the basic laws of the game and also added several new rules to make referees even busier.

But there was strong resistance to the concept of TV assistance for referees.

"We are anxious television doesn't take over the game by controlling the referee," Blatter said. "Football is composed of human beings, human frailties, mistakes and errors. We have to live with that."

The board also rejected the idea of introducing a second referee.

"We have not received any official application for this but we are unanimous that one referee will be in control, not two or three," Blatter said.

The decision to restrict the amount of time the goalkeeper can keep pos-

session of the ball is to stop time-wasting.

"Videos from French and Spanish games revealed that goalkeepers had controlled the ball for an average of 12 or 20 seconds, thus slowing up play," Blatter said.

Other rule changes introduced by the board were: — an indirect free kick will be awarded if a goalkeeper handles the ball directly from a throw-in;

— a player bleeding from a wound must leave the field for treatment;

— thermal shorts must be the same colour as the player's shorts;

— a goal can be scored direct from the kick-off;

— players who don't

retreat the required distance at the re-start of play at a free kick now face being cautioned;

— the ball is in play as soon as it moves forward from kick-off and not as in the past when it has completed a full circumference.

The international board is the sole body responsible for determining the laws of soccer. It is made up of the four United Kingdom associations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) which have one vote each and FIFA, representing the rest of the world with four votes.

Havelange also announced that nine countries had indicated interest

in staging the 2006 World Cup — Germany, England, Russia, South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Argentina, Brazil and Australia.

"The first association to inform FIFA was Germany, and England's announcement was made last October," the FIFA president said.

Havelange stated no applications would be officially invited for the 2006 finals until after the next World Cup in France next year had been completed.

"All national associations except those in Asia — the confederation organising the 2002 finals — are entitled to apply," Havelange said. "Restricting applications to one country per continent would be unfair."

Horrific crash ends Turkish club's season

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish second division club Erzurumspor will not play again this season following a horrific road crash that left two players and one club executive dead and 14 injured, a club official said.

"Five players are still in hospital, one is critically injured. We have nobody to play, the season is finished for us," club official Murat Demir told Reuters.

The Turkish Football Association has said the

club will stay in the second division despite being unable to finish the season.

The accident happened last week when the club's minibus crashed into a tanker while travelling to Ankara for a league match. The tanker driver also died in the crash.

The Turkish F.A. has begun a campaign to help the club, with the executive board donating two billion lira (\$16.5 million) to initiate it.

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Kabariti agrees to study engineers' demands but warns against strikes

By Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti Saturday declared that his government would not reverse any past gains made by public sector engineers, but ruled out special privileges being accorded to any specific group.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting he held with the leaders of hundreds of engineers who staged a two-hour sit-in in front of the Prime Ministry, Mr. Kabariti said that any future allowances system and incentives would be geared towards attracting certain specialties in the judicial, educational and technological fields.

"The government has a comprehensive plan to satisfy the country's needs in the coming century," he said. We look at the allowances system as a system of incentives adopted to meet the needs of the market."

Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) President Laith Shbeilat described the meeting with the prime minister as "positive."

JEA Deputy President Husni Abu Ghida told the Jordan Times that Mr. Kabariti personally pledged to follow up on most of the articles of the memorandum of understanding reached between the engineers and a special ministerial committee except those pertaining to salary increases and promotion in salary scale.

A special ministerial committee formed to study the engineers' demands agreed last month to amend their basic salary allowances and promised to send the decision to the Cabinet for approval.

Public sector engineers were asking for a 180 per cent increase in their basic salaries, which currently average JD150.

They were also demanding a promotion to higher levels on the public sector employee scale. Public sector employees are rated on a scale of 1-10, the lowest being 10.

Mr. Abu Ghida earlier told the Jordan Times that before 1988 newly graduated engineers could begin their careers as public employees

from grade five, while today these engineers are hired as sixth grade employees with less benefits and allowances.

Engineers complained that since 1988 their salaries have diminished by 30 per cent.

Mr. Abu Ghida said the government had promised to amend the current by-laws regulating the allowances for public sector engineers within three months from last October.

"It has been four months and no serious action was made by the government," he said earlier.

However, he added, that Mr. Kabariti "admitted that the delay was from the government and asked to be given some time in order to look into the matter."

The prime minister warned the engineers against taking any more protest action against the government as "the law does not allow anybody to strike."

Mr. Abu Ghida said the general assembly's meeting on Tuesday will decide whether or not the engineers will proceed with protest action.

'3 among detainees in Lebanon definitely Red Army suspects'

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Three Japanese are among nine or 10 people held on suspicion of links to the Japanese Red Army, newspapers reported Saturday as prosecutors promised to end the confusion over the supposed suspects.

After the arrests two weeks ago, Japanese reports said those detained were members of the gang that carried out spectacular attacks in the 1970s. But questions have arisen since over whether they are extremists — or even Japanese.

Prosecutor-General Adnan Addoum, who is in charge of the investigation, told reporters that the mystery will soon be solved.

"Everything will be clarified within a few days," Mr. Addoum said in remarks published in newspapers Saturday. He spoke after meeting Friday with a Japanese security delegation.

The Beirut leftist daily Al Safir said that Lebanon's state security apparatus was currently holding three Japanese — who are not members of the Red Army — along with three Palestinians, a Lebanese woman and Asians who carried forged passports.

The independent Al Nahar and other dailies said Japanese security officials presented Lebanon with documents, photographs and fingerprints to help in the investigation.

On Friday, Al Nahar quoted an unidentified source as saying an army officer acted on his own to track down the suspects and informed the Japanese without going through proper channels.

The confusion has turned what could have been a success for Lebanon — which is trying to overcome its reputation as a haven for extremists — into a major embarrassment.

After the initial Japanese reports, Lebanese officials confirmed the arrests. But then both Interior Minister Michel Murr and Mr. Addoum denied there were any Japanese nationals arrested.

KDP delegation holds talks with Cairo officials

CAIRO (AP) — A high-level delegation from one of the main Iraqi Kurdish groups has had talks with Egyptian officials on the situation in northern Iraq, a Kurdish spokesman and an Egyptian daily reported Saturday.

The meeting was unusual since Egypt has distanced itself from Kurdish and other Iraqi factions seeking to topple President Saddam Hussein since it opposes partitioning Iraq among its Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish communities.

The government daily Al Ahram said the visiting delegation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was headed by Jawhar Namiq, speaker of the self-styled parliament formed by Kurds after they took control of an enclave in northern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf war. It gave no details on the meetings with Egyptians.

But Hoshiyar Zebari, a

member of the KDP leadership, told the Associated Press that the talks were aimed at briefing the Egyptian officials on the latest developments in the Kurdish area.

"We wanted to tell the Egyptians that we are not a secessionist party and we are seeking a democratic solution to the Kurdish problem within the unity of Iraq," he said from his London office.

Mr. Zebari said the delegation, which has gone on to Syria, is also scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries in an attempt to seek Arab support for the Kurds.

The KDP, which is headed by Massoud Barzani, has maintained ties with the Iraqi regime on and off. It is sharing power in northern Iraq with its main rival, the Iran-backed Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by Jalal Talabani.

Qatari minister to visit Bahrain

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar said Saturday that Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jasssem Al Thani will visit Bahrain Sunday to boost recently improved relations between the two countries at odds over a decades-old territorial dispute.

Sheikh Hamad spoke to Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Ben Mubarak Al Khalifa by telephone Saturday, the official Qatari News Agency said.

The improvement in relations resulted from several meetings by the other four members of the Gulf Cooperation Council — Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The four-country committee on Qatari-Bahraini reconciliation drew up a "compromise proposal" to reduce tension, which included a halt to news media campaigns aimed at each other and commitments by each not to back the other countries' opposition.



Residents of the northwestern Iranian village of Kalkhouran, 20 kilometres from the city of Ardabil, pay their respects on Saturday before the corpses of some of the victims of the earthquake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, that shook the region on Friday (AFP photo)

Iran quake death toll rises to 350

ARDABIL, Iran (Agencies) — At least 350 people were killed and 1,650 injured in the powerful earthquake which shook the Ardabil region of northwestern Iran, an official said here Saturday.

Fifty-six villages were destroyed or severely damaged in Friday's quake, which measured 5.5 on the Richter scale and left thousands homeless. Mahmud Ahmadi Nejad, the governor of Ardabil in Iranian Azerbaijan, told reporters.

Rescuers were able to reach the disaster zone

despite the rugged terrain in Ardabil, reputed to be the coldest region in Iran with temperatures sinking to 10 degrees Celsius below freezing (14 degrees Fahrenheit).

Ardabil, in a mountainous, sometimes inaccessible region west of the Caspian Sea, has been blanketed in snow for several days and the radio reported a heavy snowfall of up to 1.5 metres in some areas.

The quake, followed by several aftershocks, struck residential suburbs of Ardabil city at 4:31 p.m.

(1301 GMT) Friday, sending residents out into the streets in panic, the official news agency IRNA said.

In the city itself, the quake shattered windows in many buildings and local authorities said telecommunications, water and electricity networks have been damaged in many nearby districts.

Almost all of Iran is regarded as a high-risk earthquake zone.

The Iranian plateau is situated on a seismic belt and several hundred tremors, including a dozen strong

quakes, are registered each year.

On Feb. 4, earthquakes with an intensity of 6.1 and 5.4 degrees struck Iran's northeastern province of Khorasan, leaving around 80 people dead, hundreds injured and around 25,000 homeless.

The official radio said food, medicine, tents and 400 workers of the Iranian Red Crescent organisation based in the four provinces bordering Ardebil had been sent to the area to assist in rescue efforts.

Sudan slams air ban threat

KHARTOUM (Agencies) — The Sudanese government lashed out Saturday at U.S. pressures on the United Nations to enforce an air embargo against Khartoum over Sudan's refusal to hand over suspected militants.

"It is now up to the (U.N.) Security Council members to demonstrate their independence from the American pressures," Sudan's deputy parliamentary speaker Abdul Aziz Shiddo said.

He told the official Al Sudan Al Hadith newspaper that the United Nations should keep in mind a recent report by Secretary-General Kofi Annan underlining the humanitarian cost to Sudan of an air embargo.

"It remains to be seen whether the Security Council will continue yielding to the American pressures after the U.N. secretary-general's report or will have its conscience awakened and fairly deal with the report," Mr. Shiddo said.

Western diplomats at the United Nations said the 15-member Security Council would apply an indefinite ban on international flights by the national carrier Sudan Airways, after weeks of fierce discussion among council diplomats.

But diplomats say that they see a long process before the Security Council adopts a draft resolution enforcing the air embargo whose principle was decided last August. The measures would reinforce diplomatic sanctions in force since May last year.

Sudan has been under sanctions for failing to hand over to Ethiopia three suspected militants wanted in connection with the June 1995 assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa. Sudan insists that the three are not on its territory.

Mr. Shiddo said that what was happening at the United Nations had "nothing to do with logic or justice," and was merely a political play orchestrated by the United States.

Iran expels 2 Turkish diplomats in growing row over Islamist approach

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Iran has asked Turkey to recall its ambassador and a consul general for "their involvement in activities inconsistent with diplomatic norms," the official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) said Saturday.

The foreign ministry asked Turkey to recall Ambassador Osman Korkuturk and the consul general in Orumiye, on the border with Turkey, IRNA said. The Turkish consul general in the northwestern Iranian city is Ufuk Ozsancak.

The move is believed to be in retaliation for Turkey's expulsion of an Iranian diplomat last week.

Relations between the two countries took a nose-dive Thursday with Turkey's expulsion of an Iranian consul general, Saeed Zare, who had criticised a Turkish military official for calling Iran a "terrorist country." Mr. Zare was given 48 hours to leave the country.

"Iran ... considers the remarks by certain Turkish officials against Iran to be unacceptable and in contradiction with the spirit of the friendly ties between the two countries," IRNA said Saturday.

Mr. Zare was consul-general in Erzurum, an eastern city 260 kilometres from the Iranian border.

Before the recent tensions, the Islamic

republic's relations with officially secular Turkey had been warming since Ankara had its first Islam-oriented government.

General Cevik Bir, the Turkish army's deputy chief of staff, was quoted by a Turkish daily last month as saying on a visit to Washington that "Iran has to be treated as a terrorist country because its support of terrorism has been proven."

Mr. Zare called Gen. Bir's remarks "irresponsible," a Turkish paper reported, and said Iran lodged a formal protest to Turkey.

Last month Iran's ambassador caused a furor for attending a demonstration calling for an Islamic regime in Turkey, Iran then withdrew the ambassador for consultations.

The bilateral unease comes at a time when Turkey's secularist military is putting pressure on the country's first Islamist-led government to steer clear of harming the 73-year-old republic's secular and democratic institutions.

The Turkish foreign ministry said Iran had told Ankara's ambassador to Tehran and its consul-general in Orumiye that they could not work there any more. "It is impossible not to wonder at the attitude of the Islamic republic of Iran," it said in a statement. "There is no reason for us to withdraw our Tehran ambassador and Orumiye consul-general. Nevertheless, we will examine the demand."

U.S.: Syria, Iran not doing enough to curb drug trade

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States said Friday it was not getting enough cooperation from Syria and Iran in curbing the trade in illicit narcotics, and said Lebanon was a centre for drug money-laundering.

"Iran and Syria were denied certification for failing to make any meaningful or effective efforts to stop heroin trans-shipment associated with both countries," a senior U.S. official said.

The official, Assistant Secretary of State Robert Gelbard, made the remarks as the United States published its annual judgment of cooperation in fighting the trade in illegal drugs.

Iran and Syria were the two Middle Eastern countries which were fully decertified on this year's list, as they have been every year since 1987.

Lebanon was decertified, but was given a special waiver on being penalised. It has received a national security waiver annually since 1987.

Efforts to counter drug trafficking by other countries in the region, includ-

ing Israel, were critiqued in the report but these states were certified as cooperating sufficiently with the United States.

In the report, Washington said increased seizures last year of drugs — notably hashish — in Syria might point to improved vigilance by Syrian anti-drug authorities, but could also be a sign of increased trafficking.

It added that Syria was a major transit country for hashish leaving Lebanon and for opium and morphine entering Lebanon from Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey.

"In many cases, shipments proceed onward to Europe and the U.S.," the report said.

The report said Iran was a major transshipment country for opiates from South West Asia, mainly opium and morphine base, from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Europe.

Iran has ratified a U.N. convention on fighting drug trafficking, but "we know of no legislation bringing domestic law and regulations into compliance with

the requirements of that convention," the report stated.

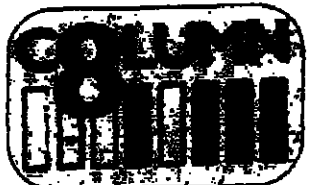
The United States praised a joint Lebanese-Syrian effort to eradicate illicit crops, begun in 1992. These crops were now being grown on some farms in Lebanon, but "they appear to be few in number."

But the report said Lebanon remained a significant transit country for reexports of cocaine and still "presents itself to narcotics traffickers as a venue for money-laundering due to bank secrecy laws."

Announcing the U.S. decisions on decertification, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Washington had a right to expect other countries to cooperate in fighting the flow of illicit narcotics.

"If the laws of supply and demand explain the trafficking of drugs across borders, they do not excuse it," she said.

"And they do not excuse a failure on the part of any government to participate in the fight against this global plague."



Mandela coy over companion

MANILA (AFP) — South African President Nelson Mandela was coy Saturday about his relationship with constant companion Graca Machel, refusing to answer questions on his arrival in the Philippines on whether they planned to marry. "My cultural background does not permit me to discuss this question with people young enough to be my children," the 78-year-old Mandela said in Manila at the start of a three-day official visit. Machel, 51, the widow of the late Mozambican President Samora Machel, has been a constant companion of Mandela since the South African leader divorced his wife Winnie Mandela last year. A Filipino official told AFP that although Machel was accompanying Mandela she was not the "first lady" of a visiting head of state and had "no official schedule."

Le Carre meets real spy

LONDON (AFP) — The British master of the cold war spy novel John Le Carre sat down to a cosy dinner with the real-life version of his Russian spy-master Creation Karla on Friday, according to press reports. Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov — who headed the Russian intelligence service, successor to the KGB, from 1991 to 1996 — met ex-British intelligence operative Le Carre at the Russian embassy in London. Primakov, on a two-day visit to London, is said to be a fan of Le Carre, creator of George Smiley and Soviet intelligence supremo Karla. Earlier in the day British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind reportedly gave Primakov a signed copy of Le Carre's "Smiley's People" before the pair discussed proposed NATO enlargement, to which Russia is opposed.

The Times on Saturday reported Le Carre's dedication in the book read: "To Yevgeni Maksimovich Primakov. With my sincere good wishes and in the hope that we may share a far better world than the one described here." The independent newspaper said it was not clear whose idea it was to invite Le Carre, but quoted an embassy official as saying: "Le Carre's name is quite well known in Russia." Le Carre — Alias David Cornwell — was once posted to the British embassy in Bonn, where he is said to have worked for British intelligence.

'Suge Knight' held for violating probation

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A judge ordered Death Row records co-founder Marion "Suge" Knight to serve nine years in prison for violating his probation on his 1995 assault conviction. Superior Court Judge Stephen Czuleger ruled that Knight, 31, violated his probation when he and the late rapper Tupac Shakur rumbled with a reputed gang member on Sept. 7 in Las Vegas. The scuffle, captured on the MGM Grand Hotel camera videotape, broke out just a few hours before the rapper was shot to death — though authorities have not officially linked the incidents. Lawyers for the 152-kilo mogul, who until he was jailed headed up the leading rap label, asked the judge to void the alleged probation violation, contending Knight was trying to break up the fight. Since Knight's arrest and Shakur's still-unresolved murder, death row records has become the target of a federal racketeering probe.